

THE CINEMATIC MODE IN TWENTIETH-CENTURY FICTION
A COMPARATIVE APPROACH

by

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ABSTRACT

This study deals with the influence of film form in fiction in terms of narrative discourse, focusing on issues of genre, narration, temporality, and the imitation of cinematic techniques. It provides a theoretical analysis of different methodologies (intermediality theory, semiotics, narratology, genre theory) which are useful to assess how a cinematic dimension has found a place in literary writing. This research, in particular, puts forth the idea of a ‘para-cinematic narrator’, a ‘flattening of the narrative relief’, and a ‘para-cinematic narrative contract’ as constitutive items of strongly cinematised fiction. These three theoretical items are subsumed in the concept of ‘cinematic mode in fiction’, which describes a distillation of characteristics of the film form on the written page. This research therefore represents a theoretical attempt to demonstrate how the cinematic component integrates the stylistic and generic traits of novels and short stories relating to different periods, styles and genres of the twentieth century. The proposed theoretical model is tested on a corpus of American, French, and, especially, Italian case studies. The remediation of film that emerges from these texts points to a complex interconnection between cinema and literature which still requires full acknowledgment in literary history.

To my family and Anita

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INTRODUCTION

Since the advent of the seventh art, literature and cinema have been profoundly and productively interwoven. Cinema has drawn on stories and narrative devices that had previously been codified in literature, while also having an immediate impact on the structures of modern and contemporary novels and short stories. The presence of literature in cinema and that of cinema in literature is observable in a variety of phenomena, including quotation, evocation, imitation, iconic reproduction, characterisation, dialogues and the re-use or adaptation of topics. The industries of cinema and publishing have certainly had a major role in steering such dynamics of exchange for economic reasons. However, writers, filmmakers, screenwriters, critics and journalists have discussed, promoted or rebutted aesthetic ideas, and fostered the spread of shared knowledge and new expertise.

The interaction or mutual influence between cinema and literature has recently been discussed in terms of the ‘return effect’ or ‘rebound effect’ that each art and industry has on another (Dagrada, 2012), extending a term that was first used by Gérard Genette in another context in the 1980s. The expanded notion of the rebound effect might be seen as the cultural logic of increasingly interconnected times, and obviously be extended to other arts and media. However, Genette’s more limited observation (1988: 73) concerning the ‘rebound’ or ‘return’ effect referred to the fact that contemporary writers could imitate camerawork: “Unlike the director of a movie, the novelist is not compelled to put his camera somewhere; he has no camera. [...] It is true that today he may pretend to have one (the return effect of one medium

on another)".¹ These phenomena of imitation have also been discussed in terms of 'remediation' (Bolter and Grusin, 1999), describing the re-use and reshaping of medial characteristics across media.

This study is strictly linked with Genette's observation and investigates how film culture and, particularly, film as a medium, has impacted writers' approaches to their own stories. It sheds light on key issues related to the remediation of the 'filmic' in literary fiction: how is film influence to be defined? Are there more precise categories to clarify such an influence? Can we talk of cinematic fiction? What exactly has passed from film to fiction? Has the film form generated a new style of writing? What changes in the act of reading? These and other questions will find some answers by the end of this research. In general, I will not argue against the notion of influence. However, my aim is to demonstrate that the dynamics of influence can be better described with critical terms that point to a more precise and nuanced variety of formal and generic characteristics in fiction. This study, therefore, concerns the effects of cinema on literature and involves the analysis of both literary and cinematic works.

On the literary side, the scope of this study is limited to fictional novels and short stories (hereafter simply 'fiction'). My corpus of books is composed mainly of Italian fiction (Federico De Roberto, *Processi verbali*, 1889; Edmondo De Amicis, *Cinematografo cerebrale*, 1907; Luigi Pirandello's *Quaderni di Serafino Gubbio operatore*, 1925; Elio Vittorini, *Uomini e no*, 1945; Pier Paolo Pasolini, *Teorema*, 1968; Antonio Tabucchi, *Piazza d'Italia*, 1975; Elsa Morante, *Aracoeli*, 1982; as well as several works by Italo Calvino), but also includes other selected case studies from American (Dashiell Hammett, *The Maltese Falcon*, 1930) and French literature (Irène

¹ "A la différence du cinéaste, le romancier n'est pas obligé de mettre sa caméra quelque part: il n'a pas de caméra. [...] Il est vrai qu'il peut aujourd'hui, effect en retour d'un medium sur l'autre, feindre d'en avoir une" (1983: 49). Because of the importance of Genette's terminology, quotations from his books will occasionally be given both in French and English. In Italy, in particular, 'rebound effect' (*effetto rebound*) has become more popular than 'return effect'.

Némirovsky, *Film parlé*, 1934; Alain Robbe-Grillet, *La Jalousie*, 1957). Given that I discuss grammatical tenses as part of my analysis (see, in particular, sections 2.2 and 2.3), my corpus includes only texts from the three languages in which I am sufficiently fluent. This is the main reason why I have limited my choice of texts to works in Italian, French and English. Additional and equally useful examples could arguably be drawn from other national literatures, wherever cinema impacted and became interconnected with literary culture. While I recognise that broadening the corpus of case studies transnationally may jeopardise the cohesion of my argumentation, I am convinced that this research benefits from the inclusion of further terms of comparison. Indeed, the circulation of film language was a rapid and transnational event, at least in Western culture; it was a cross-cultural exchange of influences. The novelty of the film medium travelled faster and touched more people than any other revolution in the arts until that time. This research would benefit from a broader range of case studies as well as a focus on international fiction, and I intend to expand it at a later stage; however, I must necessarily limit my analysis here to carefully selected examples for reasons of space.²

Rather than focusing on how cinema interacted with literature in the Italian, French and American contexts taken separately, my aim is to open a new perspective on the ‘cinematic’ in fiction in theoretical terms, by leveraging the great diversity of my chosen examples. Most of them have been attached to strong and codified literary genres and subgenres: as a significative sample, I mention the cinema novel (*Quaderni di Serafino Gubbio operatore*), the hardboiled novel (*The Maltese Falcon*), the coming-of-age story (*Film parlé*), the Resistance novel (*Uomini e no*), also with connotations of the fantastic (*Il sentiero dei nidi di ragno*), the love triangle

² As a matter of fact, as Catherine Brown (2013: 84-5) has recently recalled, the number of *comparanda* greatly influences the outcome of analysis; Haun Saussy (2003) has also argued that further reference to a second and third language may reveal some aspects that might be left out of a monolingualistic approach.

(*La Jalousie*), the thesis novel (*Teorema*), the (micro) historical novel (*Piazza d'Italia*) and the *Familienroman* (*Aracoeli*). The examples coming from beyond Italy therefore integrate the Italian ones and allow me to compare a wider range of different languages, genres, styles, and narrative situations in narratological and generic terms. Therefore, they enable me to produce a more nuanced and integrated analysis. Hammett's novel is likely the most important among the earliest instances of the hardboiled fiction which includes a cinematic dimension; Nemirovsky's short story is an early example of straightforward film imitation; the peculiar features of Robbe-Grillet's *nouveau roman* make it an oft-quoted textbook case for many aspects, including the cinematisation of writing. Similar to all Italian case studies treated in this research, these three examples are meant to be more representative of how film form integrates with their literary characteristics and the subgenres to which they belong, rather than the national contexts from which they originate. My focus is more on the exchange, imitation or reshaping of forms and structures; less on the broad and complex interconnections of cultures, themes, professional expertise, and economic interests in which cinema and literature are embedded. Therefore, these case studies are meant to be representative of a diversified remediation of film form in written narratives; and, in turn, they point to a specific genre category that enables them all to be linked. I will discuss this genre category in the next chapters in terms of the 'cinematic mode' in twentieth-century fiction.

Regarding cinematic aspects, I focus on film as a medium and, particularly, on film as a narrative device. I am well aware that non-narrative and non-fictional films exist. However, non-narrative, non-fictional, and documentary films seem to have had a limited impact on writers' styles compared to narrative films. If anything, writers were fascinated by the faithfulness with which cinematic images reproduce reality. This faithfulness immediately appeared as an inherent quality in the medium and an important feature of narrative films as well. Therefore, without neglecting the impact of the early "cinema of attractions" (roughly 1895-1906; see Gunning, 1990), I deal with cinematic language as one fundamentally codified

by the “cinema of narrative integration” (Gunning 1994: 6), the subsequent Hollywood model,³ as well as other classic montage theories, such as that of Sergei M. Eisenstein. This means that, fundamentally, I deal with basic features of the film form following on from cinema’s “second birth” (Gaudreault and Marion 2005) at the end of the 1900s and afterwards. In short, this study seeks to go beyond the specificities of cinematic movements, directors or movies, and focuses on the impact that certain basic and common features of narrative film have had on literary fiction. Most of my references are classic films, broadly speaking, as they have exerted greater influence on many of the writers I deal with.

The timespan I focus on covers about one hundred years, from Federico De Roberto’s *Processi verbali* (1889) to Italo Calvino’s *Palomar* (1983). This period includes the advent of cinema, its development into a fully-fledged art form, and its definitive affirmation as a cultural institution. In this period of time, both literature and cinema evidently went through significant changes fostered by technical and production improvements, renewed epistemological grounds, and different aesthetic movements. The diversity of both the films and works of fiction that I deal with is aimed precisely at demonstrating the variety of filmic influences on works of fiction that are so diverse from one another.

The interconnection between cinema and literature has long suffered from diffidence and misreading grounded in historical circumstances. Early films, in fact, were screenings of simple scenes from daily life, jokes, and minimal narratives. This new ‘spectacle’ was presented in outdoor fairs, music halls and variety theatres, and astonished audiences at the time. The first cinema theatres and nickelodeons appeared in Europe and the US around 1905 (Abel, 2005: 226-8), and when the advent of feature films in the 1910s increasingly broadened the market, the fledgling medium further developed its artistic potential. More

³ Among the many contributions on the topic, see the fundamental Bordwell, Staiger and Thompson (1988).

complex stories appeared on the silver screen, and film companies started tinkering with an important heritage of literary narratives for cinematic purposes, thereby raising the status of their products by associating them to a more authoritative art. The profitable strand of cinematic adaptation was born, and for many years, cinema was regarded as a parasitic industry aimed at a low-brow public and threatening the ‘Republic of Letters’.

Many writers, journalists, philosophers and artists in general immediately attempted to comprehend the new cultural phenomenon and gradually engaged with the cinema industry. In some cases, their discourses moved from stark rejection toward outright enthusiasm for the film culture and medium. However, for a number of decades, writers, in particular, looked to the cinema as a means of popularising literary stories. Their interest in the cinema as a spectacle, as well as their relationship with the film industry, has long remained contradictory, sometimes reluctantly confessed or even withheld. Since the first decades of the twentieth century, many were attracted by relatively easy earnings and celebrity, but most of them also showed a genuine interest in the new and ever-evolving medium. An eighty-year-old Leo Tolstoy understood the winds of change with certain prescience in 1908:

You will see that the little clicking contraption with the revolving handle will make a revolution in our life – in the life of writers. It is a direct attack on the old methods of literary art. We shall have to adapt ourselves to the shadowy screen and to the cold machine. A new form of writing will be necessary. I have thought of that and I can feel what is coming.

But I rather like it. The swift change of scene, this blending of emotion and experience – it is much better than the heavy, long-drawn-out kind of writing to which we are accustomed. It is closer to life. (Starr, 1972: 32)

To provide a minimal survey of the stances taken by writers towards cinema in the first decades, in Italy we find the circumspect attitude of Giovanni Verga, the successful engagement of Gabriele D’Annunzio, the involvement of Guido Gozzano and the

glorification of cinema by futurist writers such as Filippo Tommaso Marinetti,⁴ the initial opposition and subsequent ‘conversion’ of Luigi Pirandello and Giacomo Debenedetti, the interest of Massimo Bontempelli and Umberto Barbaro (cf. Andreazza 2008; Ivaldi 2011: 13-48). Examples from France are the positive reception and seminal writings of Guillaume Apollinaire and Ricciotto Canudo, the enthusiasm for American cinema shown by Jean Cocteau, Blaise Cendrars and the young Surrealists André Breton and Philippe Soupault (cf. Carou 2002; Shi 1981). In Ireland we have James Joyce’s attempt to establish the Volta cinema in 1909, and his meeting with Eisenstein in 1929; moreover, there is George Bernard Shaw’s passion for film and contempt for Hollywood. Moving to the United Kingdom, in 1926 Virginia Woolf wrote an important and ironic essay on cinema (Woolf 1994), where film is seen as both an archaic and modern medium. In the United States, I cannot help but stress the influence of Eisenstein on John Dos Passos, and the work of many writers, such as Dashiell Hammett, James M. Cain, William Faulkner, Francis Scott Fitzgerald, Theodore Dreiser and Nathanael West, in Hollywood, as well as their sarcasm and frustration with the Hollywood environment; moreover, outside of Hollywood, Ernest Hemingway’s and John Steinbeck’s interest in and contribution to documentary films in the late 1930s.⁵ Finally, I recall the interest in cinema of American-born imagist poets such as Ezra Pound, Hilda Doolittle and Thomas S. Eliot, and their huge influence within and beyond the Anglo-American world (cf. Marcus 2007; Seed 2005, 2012).

⁴ As well as the contrasting positions on the part of painters such as Umberto Boccioni and Giacomo Balla.

⁵ Together with Dos Passos, Hemingway took part in the production of Joris Ivens’s propaganda documentary *The Spanish Earth* (1937) and contributed the voice-over commentary. In the late 1930s, Steinbeck became close friends with documentary filmmaker Pare Lorentz. Lorentz’s *The Plow that Broke the Plains* (1936) and *The River* (1938) influenced him during his drafting of *The Grapes of Wrath* (1939). These films are discussed in Seed (2012: 178-81, 194-8).

The idea of the superiority of literature was not in doubt during the first decades of the twentieth century. However, competition with cinema became inevitable, particularly as the first sound films appeared at the end of the 1920s and when cinema gradually overcame its status of inferiority in relation to fiction in the aftermath of World War Two. In the world of cinema, these are the decades where most film theorists sought to pinpoint the specificity of the seventh art. Examples can be found in articles and essays by Ricciotto Canudo (1966, 1978), Béla Balázs (2002), Sergei M. Eisenstein (1942, 1949), Jean Epstein (cf. Keller and Paul, 2012), and Rudolph Arnheim (1983). Similarly, the world of literature reacted by highlighting the substantial difference between the two expressive forms.

That being said, throughout the world cinema became the main conveyance overall for a new aesthetic education. For certain established writer-filmmakers, such as Alain Robbe-Grillet or Mario Soldati, it constituted a crucial point of reference by means of which they could rethink their own art. In 1960, John Updike wrote his *Rabbit, Run* in the present tense to mimic “the way motion pictures occur before us, immersingly” (Updike 2006: 269), and imagined his novel had to bear the subtitle ‘A Movie’. In Italy, Pier Paolo Pasolini’s choice to become a filmmaker in the 1960s is the most striking example of how cinema nurtured and transformed the artistic development of a writer, because cinema was conceived as a new form of fiction writing and a new form of poetry, the ‘cinema of poetry’ (Pasolini 2000). For a generation of Italian writers, especially for those living in rural areas such as Leonardo Sciascia, Gesualdo Bufalino and Luigi Meneghelli, “il cinema – e soprattutto il cinema americano” was a source of fascination and “il punto di raccordo privilegiato, se non unico, con le conquiste della civiltà industriale”, as Gian Piero Brunetta points out (2004: 112).

Ambiguity and second thoughts or, on the contrary, the open acknowledgment of film influence, continued in the second half of the twentieth century, exemplified in Italy by Leonardo Sciascia in the 1970s, and Giuseppe Pontiggia in recent years, as well as by Don DeLillo in the US and Jean Echenoz in France. Sciascia was distrustful toward cinema and

never took part in the production of the adaptations of his novels. In fact, referring to these adaptations he spoke of betrayal. However, he also claimed: “Per il mio modo di raccontare, di fare il racconto, credo di avere un debito più verso il cinema che verso la letteratura” (Collura, 2000: 81).⁶ Speaking of his *Vite di uomini non illustri* (1993), Giuseppe Pontiggia confessed in 2001:

Io ho impiegato trentacinque anni della mia vita per dire che il cinema non ha avuto influenza, per poi capire che ce l'ha, che il cinema ha avuto una parte importante nella formazione dei narratori del Novecento, come la letteratura l'ha avuta sui cineasti. Per me l'ha avuta soprattutto nel montaggio, nei campi lunghi, nei primi piani. Sicuramente c'è una suggestione indiretta. Anche nei dialoghi. Io ho studiato a lungo i dialoghi di Bergman, perché sono dialoghi di grande significato anche letterario (cf. Mazzola, 2001).

DeLillo, for his part, admitted that cinema has played an important part in his writing, as he has been influenced by the techniques and ideology in the art of Eisenstein and Jean-Luc Godard (cf. Morley 2006; Osteen 1996). Echenoz has systematically included cinematic references in his novels and recently claimed: “Rétrospectivement, j'ai le sentiment d'avoir appris, de manière inconsciente, beaucoup de choses sur le roman en regardant des films. Un peu comme le jazz, le cinéma m'a donné des outils pour écrire” (Delaroche and Liger 2012). As happened to many other writers, cinema was not the only influence in their work, but it certainly was an important one that provided a cutting-edge aesthetic toolkit to be employed in literature. More specifically, in another interview, Echenoz stressed:

Ce que j'ai eu envie de faire, que je fais moins parce que ça m'attire moins, mais que j'ai beaucoup fait dans mes premiers livres, c'était d'essayer d'utiliser la rhétorique du cinéma, la grammaire cinématographique, de l'importer dans le champ de la littérature, de voir comment l'on pouvait transposer des choses comme champ/contrechamp, fondu enchaîné, le mouvement de caméra, le montage, la musique de film... plein de choses techniques de cet ordre. (cf. Clerc 2001: 319)

⁶ See also Raffaele Pinto (2012) on Sciascia and the cinema.

These claims have by no means been isolated but diffused among many writers throughout the twentieth-century and beyond, even if at times cinematic influences and borrowings have been admitted only after the fact.

Whereas, in the main, writers were immediately quite receptive to cinema, interest on the part of academics arrived rather late. The idea of an increased emphasis given to visual aspects of representation and a general tendency towards the adoption of scenic time is found in Percy Lubbock's (1921) and Joseph Warren Beach's (1932) pioneering studies on the modern novel. While important contributions in film appeared between the 1920s and the 1940s, historical and theoretical approaches to the exchanges between cinema and literature have increased only from the middle of the 20th century (e.g., Beja, 1979; Bluestone, 1957; Richardson, 1969). Criticism has gradually approached such dynamics of exchange through a more accurate lens, singling out contact points and irreconcilable differences, thereby paving the way for new and prolific areas of research in comparative and intermedia studies. However, for decades a strong academic tradition has focused on the presence of literature in cinema or its influence on the cinema industry, mostly due to the important practice of adaptation. This largely dominant line of research has produced fundamental insights into how cinema has absorbed literary models, re-addressed themes and reshaped narratives by means of its inherent qualities, thereby providing useful criteria for a better understanding of the interaction between the two arts.⁷

The reverse approach (film narratives and, especially, film form in literature) has been attempted sporadically. While intriguing perspectives have emerged from narratology and semiotics, which have largely explored one common ground of film and fiction, namely

⁷ An exhaustive account of these contributions would fall outside the scope of this brief introduction. See some recent companions to film and literature (Corrigan 1999; Stam and Raengo 2004); as well as Linda Hutcheon (2006), who among other things points out that readers nowadays often discover books after having watched or heard of its adaptation.

narrativity, comparatively few contributions from literary positions have gone beyond literature to consider the cinematic contribution to modern and contemporary writing, despite the fact that cinema has proved so influential in shaping modern-day imagination and the addressee's 'horizon of expectation' (Jauss, 1982). Since seeing stories is part and parcel of everyone's normal activity of reading (Eco, 1979), it seems particularly plausible that cinematic narrativity has gradually transformed our attitude toward reading: the intertextual competence has increasingly become intermedial.⁸ Unfortunately, while a thorough survey of the topic seems highly fruitful, a small number of books have been published concerning the influence of film on fiction.

L'âge du roman américain (1948) by Claude-Edmonde Magny was the seminal work that indirectly addressed the influence of cinema on literature.⁹ Magny discussed American writers such as John Dos Passos, Ernest Hemingway, William Faulkner, and John Steinbeck, who were fascinated by cinematic narrativity and involved in the cinema industry. She interpreted some of their narrative strategies in terms of re-use of certain cinematic techniques, and pointed out that a certain 'behaviourist' style and a number of elliptic effects imitate cinematic visualisation and editing.¹⁰ Moreover, she wisely hinted at the idea of a convergence between the arts and broadened her discourse to aesthetic twists in narrative perception, because she

⁸ See Graham Allen (2000) for a recent survey from the seminal positions of Mikhail M. Bakhtin and Julia Kristeva to present-day issues about intertextuality. Intermediality will be more extensively treated in Chapter 1.

⁹ This text remained substantially unknown until its rediscovery by Genette (1966; 1983: 44), who considered it the starting point of French narratology.

¹⁰ 'Behaviourism' in literature mirrored the trend in psychology championed by forerunner psychologist John B. Watson from 1914. A behaviourist style in literature is an objective style that focuses on characters' bodies, gestures and behaviour, to the detriment of their psychology. In short, the characters' psychology emerges through the focus on their external being and actions, as in cinema. Gestures were particularly emphasised in early silent films due to the nature of the medium. As Meliès stated in 1907: "in the cinematograph [...] gesture is everything" (Meliès 1984: 28). I quote from a translation of the article published in *La Revue du Cinema* on 15th October 1929. The original was published in the 1907 issue of the *Annual*.

was likely aware that the notion of influence might have lent itself to misleading interpretations (1948: 109).¹¹

The difficulty of proving influence between works of art would be discussed again later by authoritative scholars such as René Wellek (“nobody has ever been able to show that a work of art was ‘caused’ by another work of art”; 1970: 35); more recently, Susan Bassnett (2007: 136) has pointed out that proving a direct influence is “a hopeless endeavour” because “writers draw their inspiration from all kinds of sources, some conscious, some unconscious, some acknowledged, some vehemently denied”, therefore “all that we, as readers, can do is to see parallels, connections, affinities, and this is a more fruitful approach than one which seeks to prove certainty where certainty is a chimera”. In the Sixties, André Bazin (1967: 61-3) similarly emphasised the fact that different languages, such as moving images and words, could be compared because of a “certain aesthetic convergence” in contemporary artistic expressions. In particular, he claimed the novel has been “somewhat shaped by the aesthetic gravitational pull of the cinema”. Nonetheless, Bazin warned that the para-cinematic strategies used by American writers could also be regarded as natural and obvious literary devices, however open to a range of other cultural suggestions they may be.

Yet, it has been noted that by the 1910s American society “became a cinematic culture, a culture which came to know itself [...] through the images and stories that Hollywood produced” (Denzin, 1995: 24). The concurrent circulation of specialised magazines (e.g. *The Motion Picture Story Magazine*, *The Motion Pictures News*, *The Film Daily*, *Photoplay*) greatly contributed to spreading the spectacle of cinema and popularising a culture which profoundly modified the social habits of the masses and fostered new discourses about celebrities.

¹¹ She also pointed out: “Notre sensibilité collective a été profondément modifiée, sans que y prenions garde, par le cinéma. Nous ne percevons plus de la même manière qu'il y a cinquante ans; en particulier, nous avons pris l'habitude de nous *voir raconter* des histoires, au lieu de les entendre narrer. La technique du récit doit nécessairement s'en trouver bouleversée” (Magny, 1948: 47).

Similarly, in Europe, the 1910s witnessed a huge increase in the circulation of American products, while cinema was still barely granted the status of a new art. The turning point occurred in the 1920s, the decade in which “people started taking the film seriously in Britain”, as Rachel Low puts it (1971: 20), but the discourse can be extended to other nations. An initial flourishing of magazines in France (e.g. *Le Film*, *Ciné pour tous*, *Cinémagazine*, *Cinéa*) and in Britain (e.g. *Kinematograph Weekly*, *Cinema*, *The Bioscope*, *The Pictures*, *The Picturegoer*, *The Picture Show*) had led critics to deal with the double nature of cinema as an art and a popular means of entertainment. Consequently, the idea of a wider influence, not only on literature but on people’s lifestyle and awareness, seems generally accepted in France in 1925, when an enquiry into the link between the two arts was conducted in *Les Cahiers du mois* (Clerc 1993: 21; Andreazza 2008: 132-40). In France and the UK, the peak in the intellectual prestige of movies owed much to the circulation of elite magazines such as *transition* and *Close Up* in the second half of the 1920s (North 2005: 63). By the same token, in Italy, where film magazines had been published since the late 1900s, new literary journals flourished in the 1920s (e.g. *Il Baretti*, *Il Convegno*, *La Fiera Letteraria*, *900*, *Solaria*) which devoted more articles and enquiries to cinema. An enquiry that appeared in *Solaria* in 1927 revealed that cinema was considered as an art by less than half of the twenty-one writers consulted. However, its status as a cultural phenomenon had considerably improved. The subsequent breakthrough of some international masterpieces into the Italian market around 1927 and 1928 greatly contributed to shifting intellectuals’ reception towards the new art (Andreazza 2008: 189). The impact of films was gradually modifying the literary ‘field’ (cf. Bourdieu 1992). Many stories and poems by that time had addressed cinema as a new fact of life,¹² while cinematic techniques began

¹² See early examples such as James B. Matthews’s 1895 short story *The Kinetoscope of Time* (Matthews 1896: 27-53), William D. Howell’s 1905 collection of travel sketches titled *London Films* (Howells 1905), or Apollinaire’s 1905 *chronique* of the universal and international Exposition of Liège titled *Le*

attracting more and more writers internationally. As David Trotter puts it (2007: 174), “the writers of the period thought *with* as well as *about* cinema”.

Thus, while there is certainly “immense value in studying literatures in terms of connections” (Bassnett, 2007: 145), the problematic ideas of influence and convergence, as well as the writers’ reactions to the cinema and the new rhythm of life, also remind us that the topic of the cinematisation of writing is better posed on historical grounds. Unfortunately, this has not always been the case. In 1964, Étienne Fuzellier applied “une méthode d’analyse et de critique fondée sur l’expérience cinématographique” and described in terms of *gros plan*, *plan général* or *plan américain* texts by Herodotus, Thucydides, Homer and Molière, underlining that “les cinéastes [...] peuvent y trouver la preuve que leur art, dans ses principes les plus profonds, est bien antérieure aux instruments et aux techniques qui lui ont donnée la vie matérielle” (Fuzellier, 1964: 239). There are arguably intimate contradictions in similar, but not isolated, approaches (e.g. Moscariello, 2005; Spiegel, 1976). Making use of cinematic terminology to deal with pre-cinematic texts is certainly acceptable,¹³ but these uses often contribute to a barren field of clichés and generate confusion (I will explore this issue in greater detail in Chapter 3). Significantly, Fuzellier completely disregarded any convergence and interplay between the arts, and claimed that “les deux arts et les deux langages sont condamnés à vivre parallèlement” and should avoid the “parasitisme réciproque où chacun, pour voler à l’autre une substance inutile, sacrifie le meilleur de lui-même” (1964: 303-4). An enquiry into filmmakers and writers conducted in the same year in Italy reveals similar stances. Interviewer Massimo D’Avack (1964: 10) even insisted on the legitimacy of

cinématographe (Apollinaire 1991: 79-81). A number of short stories published in the UK before 1905 are discussed in Shail (2010). In Italy, De Amicis’s *Cinematografo cerebrale* is a notable case, which will be discussed in Chapter 4. See further Italian examples in Marchesi (2009).

¹³ A good example is Umberto Eco’s description of the beginning of Alessandro Manzoni’s *I promessi sposi* in cinematic terms (Eco, 1985: 253).

establishing a connection, claiming, on the contrary, that to discuss literary reminiscences and quotes in films meant to do “una di quelle operazioni mentali estremamente soggettive e sentimentali che non hanno alcun riscontro nella realtà e che sono, quindi, dei puri nonsensi”, completely ignoring the reverse perspective too, namely the possibility that writers had cinema in their background and were somehow influenced by it. Similar claims evidently reflect the above-mentioned misconceptions and the need to highlight the specificities of each artistic field.

Limiting my attention to Italian, Anglo-American and French examples, a second generation of studies (Cohen 1979; Murray 1972; Morrissette 1985; Spiegel 1976) and a third one (Clerc 1993; Brandi 2007; Ivaldi 2011; Seed 2012) have continued Magny’s seminal perspective without any observable radical change in methodology. The dominant methodology has combined historical analysis of the relationship between writers and the cinema industry with the main tenets of early film theories and classical narratology. The limit of these studies is that the ‘filmic’ in fiction has too often been approached with imprecise, if not impressionistic, analyses. However, they allow for a preliminary definition of the issues related to the influence of cinema and contribute to the larger field of study devoted to the interconnections between the two arts.

In Italy in particular, comparative and narratological investigations into the shifts in fictional strategies have rarely been attempted with reference to the cinema, with notable exceptions (e.g. Giovannetti, 2012). Antonio Costa (1993) had the merit of reintroducing the topic of cinematic fiction by bringing into question viewing/reading clichés, and stating that the narratological perspective is all the more useful to rejecting any old, fruitless stances on the possibility of comparing the two media. Costa’s fundamental reading of Italo Calvino’s *Palomar* (1983) would prompt a number of later studies. However, the influence of film on

prose writing has remained substantially unfocused until very recently.¹⁴ Gian Piero Brunetta conducted important research (1972, 1976, 1994, 1997a, 1997b, 2004) throughout his decade-long career and offered precious references about the reception of cinema by Italian intellectuals. He also pointed to some implications in terms of creative writing in a variety of authors directly or indirectly influenced by the seventh art, such as Elio Vittorini, Goffredo Parise, Vasco Pratolini, Giuseppe Pontiggia, Gianni Celati, Vincenzo Cerami, Antonio Tabucchi, Andrea De Carlo:

Il cinema ha pesato molto sulla letteratura, ha avuto una funzione importante di modificatore delle sue strutture, della creatività e delle modalità della scrittura, ma ha anche prodotto una serie di altri mutamenti “catastrofici” sul modo di essere, di immaginare e scrivere e sull’identità del letterato, sul lessico, sul modo in cui il letterato ha pensato e concepito in termini visivi le storie, prima di trascriverle sulla pagina. (Brunetta, 2004: X)

Il problema è di vedere in senso più concreto il cinema agire nella poetica e nell’immaginazione creativa di un autore, riconoscendone il peso e l’adozione consapevole o farne emergere influssi meno visibili, ma capaci – se ci si passa l’espressione – di “ocularizzarne la scrittura”. (Brunetta, 2004: 137)¹⁵

More recent endeavours have revitalised this critical area (Arnaudo 2003; De Pau and Torello 2008; Maggitti 2007; Marchesi 2009; Ercolino et al. 2015). In particular, Paolo Brandi (2007) attempted to systematise the field through well-organised historical and methodological sections, to which three major case studies (Dino Campana, Italo Calvino, Antonio Tabucchi) are attached. Federica Ivaldi (2011) has recently added more literary

¹⁴ Some studies on cinema and literature (Cavalluzzi 1997; Cortellazzo and Tomasi 1998; Moscariello 1981; Tinazzi 2007; Manzoli 2003) provide a historical background and focus on adaptations, but scarcely deal with filmic traits in fiction; some others (Albano 1997; Bonsaver, McLaughlin, and Pellegrini 2008; Colombi and Esposito 2008; Fadda 2004; Perniola 2002) provide a more comprehensive approach to the relationship between cinema and literature, but they do not address the topic in terms of cinematic fiction. In general, from recent criticism (e.g. Andreazza, 2008; Bartolomeo et al., 2001; Falaschi, 1996; Gambacorti, 2003; Nuvoli, 2001), an accurate historical framework about writers and the cinema comes to light.

¹⁵ Brunetta draws on the concept of *ocularisation* (Jost 1987), which I will deal with in Chapter 2. Note also the use of the term in Costa (1983: 11-32).

references to the critical debate. Situated following a useful buffer chapter on cinematic experimentations in Edmondo De Amicis, Dino Campana, John Dos Passos, Antonio Tabucchi, Mario Soldati and Andrea Camilleri, the case study section discusses the impact and re-use of the cinema in works by Elsa Morante, Alberto Moravia and Pier Paolo Pasolini. At present, these two studies are still the most complete Italian essays on the topic, but partly suffer from an outdated methodology (linked mainly with theories of the 1970s). They share a valid starting approach, but appear in dire need of updating, especially as far as critical terminology is concerned; moreover, some of the close readings prove problematic, and I will mention them in my analyses.

The impact of cinema on literary modernism has recently attracted significant academic research in the UK and the US as the modernist period was key to both the definition of film as an art and the remediation of film form in fiction. Many scholars have emphasised that the mutual interaction of cinema and modernist culture cannot be separated from the overall cultural processes in which they are rooted. In particular, cinema was continuous with the complex visual culture in Western world from the middle of the nineteenth century to the turn of the twentieth century; therefore, it was neither an absolute novelty as far as its inherent visual component is concerned, nor was it the only and most important medium or art with the power of attraction. Suffice to say that the borders between theatre and cinema were fluid, and many filmmakers and actors worked on both sides. On a similar level, in that time frame many writers were also playwrights or otherwise engaged with theatre, and could look to pictorial avant-gardes such as post-impressionism, cubism, dadaism, and surrealism in search of inspiration and new formal means. However, a strong connection between cinema and literary modernism has been affirmed beyond any reasonable doubt, either in terms of parallelism, affinity, or generalised influence. In particular, David Trotter (2007: 3) claimed that early cinema and modernism were sibling cultural phenomena that should be “understood as constituting and constituted by parallel histories”. Moreover, he recalled that,

while literature had always been “a representational medium”, film was initially conceived and discussed as, fundamentally, “a recording medium”. In fact, like photograph and phonograph before its advent, cinema contributed to modifying the sense of the past and present. This feature of the film medium had a significant impact on modernist writers and triggered their novel “will-to-automatism”. Such interest in sensory automatism translated into an approach to writing that was able to render both the external world and the psychological processes with more immediacy: as Trotter claims, “we might say, then, that modernism’s axiom or formula was literature as (recording) medium *before* literature as (representational) art” (2007: 5).¹⁶ Laura Marcus (2010: 30), on the other hand, pointed out the novelty of the “city symphony” in films of the 1920s that follow the course of a day in the life of a city, such as Charles Sheeler and Paul Strand’s *Manhatta* (1921), Walter Ruttmann’s *Berlin: Symphony of a Great City* (1927), or Dziga Vertov’s *Man with a Movie Camera* (1929), and their affinity with “one-day novels” of the period, such as Joyce’s *Ulysses* (1922) or Woolf’s *Mrs Dalloway* (1925), which “open up the question of ‘modernist dailiness’”. Finally, Andrew Shail (2012a: 196) has recently held that cinema was a “major pillar for the emergence of modernism” while, in turn, “modernism served as a launch-pad for intellectual film culture in several regions” (2012b: 3). Ultimately, cinema was soon granted an ambivalent link with both ‘high’ and popular culture and functioned as a bridge between the two.¹⁷

¹⁶ See also Michael North (2009: 5), who maintains that modernism as a whole can be seen as an “imbalanced mixture of [...] the human and the mechanical”.

¹⁷ On modernism and cinema, see also Marcus (2014), Susan McCabe (2004) as well as interesting analyses on a number of writers in Edward Murray (1972), or on cinematic techniques and stream of consciousness in Alan Spiegel (1976). In particular, many studies on Joyce and the cinema have recently flourished: see Thomas Burkhardt (2001), Maria DiBattista (2006), John McCourt (2010), Cleo Hanaway (2012, 2017), and Keith Williams (2001: 1), who claims that “in its broadest sense, intertextuality with film is one of the most energizing drives in his Modernist project”. See Trotter (2007: 159-79) on the influence of film on Woolf and its “crucial lesson about constitutive absence” (169). Marcus (2007: 137) stresses the writer’s “strategic and self-conscious play with film form” already observable in *Jacob’s Room* (1922). See David Seed (2012) on the impact of film on modernist American writers such as Dos Passos, Hemingway and Faulkner.

The generalised visual compulsion to which cinema and literature were attached in that period is embedded in a broader paradigm shift in technology (e.g. the diffusion of electric light, x-rays, wireless telegraphy, telephones, bicycles, trains, automobiles, aeroplanes), physics (general relativity), philosophy (Bergson), psychology (William James; Freud), industrial production (Taylorism, serialisation), and a new perception of time (the introduction of time zones, the spread of the wristwatch, the difference between private time and public time, the idea of time reversibility). All these changes transformed the dimensions of life and thought. Time, in particular, came to be understood as “heterogenous, fluid and reversible” (Kern 1983: 34; cf. Doane 2002). The cinema constituted an important turning point within this overarching paradigm change (cf. Hauser, 1999b). It emerged attached to its technological forebears and was embedded in an epistemological milieu that was so ripe with novelty. By improving the technology of optical devices such as the kinetoscope or the *Kaiserpanorama*, early films fascinated spectators because of their quality to capture movement and work as spatiotemporal machines.

Cinema provided people with new images of a new and rapidly evolving world. As Alberto Abruzzese (2000: 474-5) remarked: “La qualità del cinema va cercata in una frattura socioculturale e antropologica che gli sta dentro sin dal suo avvento”. Gertrude Stein saw this ‘fracture’ in the possibility of reproducing movement; but she also linked cinema to more general phenomena of serialisation and repetition (cf. Seed 2012: 28-30). In the 1920s Dos Passos (1988: 173) considered that “from being a wordminded people we are becoming an eyeminded people” because of the developments in the visual arts, advertising and, above all, cinema. And Alan Spiegel pointed out that “by the time Joyce was writing *Ulysses*, a novelist need never have gone to a movie to know what was meant by one” because the idea of film had become such a part of general culture and certain visual effects were at one’s disposal at any rate:

one could learn all about camera angles from the ads on billboards and in magazines; or all about dolly shots and tracking from the window of a moving car; or all about montage by simply trying to keep up with what was happening all around one during rush hour in any major international city. Any artist could be influenced by film and know all about it simply by being alive and visually alert in the modern world. (Spiegel, 1976: XII-XIII)

Although perhaps exaggerated, similar claims reflect shared insights. These are also verifiable in a rather eloquent letter from James Joyce to his brother Stanislaus or, in literature, in Luigi Pirandello's *Quaderni di Serafino Gubbio operatore* (1925).¹⁸ Cinema was best fitted to capturing movement and reproducing the hustle and assault of images typical of contemporary life. The diffusion of protocinematic optical devices and the advent of the “image-regime” (Shail 2012a: 36) of cinema went hand in hand with the regime of shock in ordinary life first recorded by Charles Baudelaire.

Above all, films were able to reproduce reality with realism, that is to provide an “impression of reality” (Metz 1974: 4). As Keith Cohen pointed out (1979: 39), on an artistic level the most relevant albeit temporary outcome of cinema was “to synthesize the goals of

¹⁸Joyce's letter is dated 7 December 1906: “Letter just received. What I have told you about rooms is painfully correct. I don't know why we were given notice by the landlady nor do I know whether it was the reason you suggest. I don't know anything except that I suppose I ought to cease grumbling and take up the white man's burden. Do you imagine you are corresponding with the indifferential calculus that you object to my vituperation on Italy and Rome. What the hell else would I do? If you had to traipse about a city, accompanied by a plaintive woman with infant (also plaintive), run up stairs, ring a bell, “Chi c'è?” “Camera!” “Chi c'è?” “Camera!” No go: room too small or too dear: won't have children, single man only, no kitchen. “Arrivederla!” Down again. Rush off: give a lesson for 9½d, rush back to bank, etc. etc. Am sending MS to John Long by same post. Didn't change anything. No pen, no ink, no table, no room, no time, no quiet, no inclination. Never mind, it will be back in a week or so. Only I stuck in ‘bloody’ before the late lamented. How I should enjoy a night on Venetian waters with Miss Farchi's romance and reality. The Italian imagination is like a cinematograph, observe the style of my letter” (Ellmann, 1975: 140-1). Note the great similarity with Pirandello's style in this passage from the novel: “Conosco anch'io il congegno esterno, vorrei dir meccanico della vita che fragorosamente e vertiginosamente ci affaccenda senza requie. Oggi, così e così; questo e quest'altro da fare; correre qua, con l'orologio in mano, per essere in tempo là. – No, caro, grazie: non posso! – Ah sì, davvero? Beato te! Debbo scappare... - Alle undici, la colazione. – Il giornale, la borsa, l'ufficio, la scuola... Bel tempo, peccato! Ma gli affari... - Chi passa? Ah, un carro funebre... Un saluto, di corsa, a chi se n'è andato. – La bottega, la fabbrica, il tribunale...” (Pirandello, 1994: 519-20).

impressionism and naturalism”, which had already been influenced greatly by photography.¹⁹

Similarly, Trotter (2007: 9) stressed the “neutrality” of early film as a medium and the role of other devices, such as the stereoscope, in the ‘education of the eye’ during the nineteenth and turn of the twentieth century (29), while also emphasising the emergence of a new, ‘haptic’ vision of objects, and the importance of this for modernist literature (27-48).²⁰ Cinema was able to satisfy an “appetite for illusion” (Bazin 1967: 11) and a “cinematic desire” (Cohen, 1979: 49) that mankind seems to have always had, a goal which not even photography had reached, and set itself as the form of art best fitted to depict the contemporary world.²¹ Thus, photography, new optical devices and aesthetic shifts in painting slowly led spectators to perceive in much the same way as the future spectator would, before the cinematic screen. Of course, the first cinema-goers were bewildered in the face of an approaching train because of the cinematic illusion of breaking the ‘fourth wall’. Tom Gunning (1995) famously described such expectations in terms of the “aesthetic of astonishment”. On the other hand, similar instances (e.g. Pieter Saendram’s impressively realistic interiors of churches, 17th century)

¹⁹ Keith Cohen (1979: 21) attributes great relevance to Impressionism: “The impressionist painter optimally became a kind of recording instrument of the external flux. He relied less and less on subjective reactions that originated internally so as to seize all the better on objective, external phenomena. This sharpening of the impressionist’s powers of objectivity goes hand in hand with a new interpretation of light to minimize the importance of subject matter”. Although minimising so much of the painter’s subjectivity is ventured, there is a part of truth in Cohen’s claim. In fact, beyond the alternative and specific achievements of the later avant-garde movements in cinema, the striking novelty of early films was indeed “the power to seize the external world directly and with a high degree of objectivity” (Cohen, 1979: 43), a fact that fulfilled the striving for visual faithfulness and realism during the nineteenth century and which had enormous impact on culture in general, for it seemed to bring photographic objectivity to completion.

²⁰ Haptic experience (from Greek *haptein*, ‘to fasten’) implies a ‘sort of touch’, a fastening, a form of attachment in seeing objects. It is different from ‘tactile’ experience and opposed to optical mode of seeing. This category was first used in the nineteenth century by art historian Alois Riegel and later recalled, among others, in the works of Walter Benjamin, Erwin Panofsky and Gilles Deleuze.

²¹ Bazin also remarked on the human background of the cinema: “any account of the cinema that was drawn merely from the technical inventions that made it possible would be a poor one indeed” (1967: 18). Indeed, brilliant *bricoleurs* throughout the centuries have pushed their visual imagination toward cinema, as Gian Piero Brunetta (1997a, 2004) also states in speaking of the importance of visual culture for the *icononauta* and the *homo cinematographicus*.

have recently been regarded as attempts to achieve immediacy and transparency in representation by ignoring or denying the presence of the medium (Bolter and Grusin, 1999).

A similar trajectory in literature is recognisable in Gustave Flaubert and French naturalism, particularly in Émile Zola: the scientific attitude here translates into a tendency to grasp reality objectively and with detachment. In Italy, an original absorption of naturalism resulted in the *verist* works of Giovanni Verga in which the narrative appears to be ‘made by itself’.²² This problematic claim to objectivity would soon be questioned and dismantled at the turn of the nineteenth and twentieth century, when British and American writers such as Stephen Crane, Henry James, Joseph Conrad and Ford Madox Ford aimed at expressing the fragmentation of subjectivity. As Cohen puts it (1979: 33), their novels were increasingly characterised by a “discontinuous continuity”, a quality that was also shared by late nineteenth-century painting (e.g. pointillism) and would later be seen as inherent in film. As a consequence, the reader-spectator gains a new role in meaning-making, being implicitly called to synthesise and unify the vision and experience of the work of art, be it fixed on a canvas, read on the page or projected onto the screen. At the turn of the century, Joseph Conrad’s claim in the Preface to *The Nigger of the ‘Narcissus’* (1897) reveals an ambition that was also shared by different artists at the time: “My task which I am trying to achieve is, by the power of the written word to make you hear, to make you feel – it is before all to make you *see*. That and no more and it is everything” (Conrad, 1935: XIV). Interestingly, similar positions had already been expressed by Flaubert in a letter dated 6 July 1852 to Louise Colet (“This faculty is, simply, genius: the ability to *see*, to have the model posing there before you”; Steegmuller,

²² See the famous passage from his novella *L’amante di Gramigna*: “La mano dell’artista rimarrà assolutamente invisibile, e il romanzo avrà l’impronta dell’avvenimento reale, e l’opera d’arte sembrerà essersi fatta da sé” (Verga, 1979: 203).

1980: 165), and would be reaffirmed by David W. Griffith in 1913 (“The task I’m trying to achieve is above all to make you see”; Jacobs, 1939: 119).²³

In the debate on cinema and literature it goes without saying that major emphasis has been placed on terms such as ‘eye’, ‘camera’, ‘visuals’, etc. Narratologist Karl Stanzel (1971, 1984) introduced the concept of *camera-eye* to compare certain literary narrators to a camera. In Spiegel, particularly, there is a recurring insistence on the ambiguous notion of ‘eye’ and the ‘camera’, rather than film narrative. I hold that this is a key point to focus on, because ‘seeing’ is not ‘making cinema’, and ‘camera’ does not equal ‘film’. The topic is better posed by leaving similar analogies behind and addressing the processes involved in experiencing storyworlds, i.e. “mentally and emotionally projected environments in which interpreters are called upon to live out complex blends of cognitive and imaginative response” (Herman, 2005: 570).²⁴ Strongly cinematised fiction triggers cinematic mental association in the reader; the storyworld tends to be perceived cinematically. Moreover, while cinematic fiction

²³ Spiegel (1976: XI-XII) points out that “Griffith wanted to make us ‘see’ in and through and finally *past* those truncated surfaces on the screen – those voiceless, disembodied heads and floating torsos – so that we could finally ‘see’ how they added up as part of a conceptual design, a continuing and cohesive narrative action”. In comparison, “Conrad wanted us to understand his story as something to be seen, while Griffith wanted us to see his images as something to be understood. Generally speaking, I would say that Griffith’s aim was the more novelistic, Conrad’s the more cinematographic. Both Griffith and Conrad, however, were starting from opposite ends of the same line and moving toward the same point in the middle: a union of image and concept, of visual fact and value. At the time he made his remark, Conrad had probably not seen a movie; yet he and Griffith shared a common aesthetic”.

²⁴ At first glance, the notion of storyworld recalls Aristotle’s notion of mimesis or Genette’s notion of *diégèse* (i.e. the fictional world of characters, “the universe in which the story takes place”; Genette, 1988: 17-8). The term ‘storyworld’ has been used in a number of different and sometimes contradictory ways. Among the most established uses of the term, Herman (2009: 105) refers to “the worlds evoked by narratives” and points out that “over the past couple of decades [...] one of the most basic and abiding concerns of narrative scholars has been how readers of print narratives, interlocutors in face-to-face discourse, and viewers of films use textual clues to build up representations of the worlds evoked by stories, or *storyworlds*” (Herman, 2009: 106). With Herman, the concept of storyworld has become genuinely transmedial, as he refers to storyworlds as “global mental representations” of “the world[s] evoked implicitly as well as explicitly by a narrative, whether the narrative takes the form of a printed text, film, graphic novel, sign language, everyday conversation, or even a tale that is projected but never actualized as a concrete artefact” (Herman, 2009: 106). Jan-Noël Thon points out that it is usually assumed “that while storyworlds are ‘medium-free’, narrative representations are fairly medium-specific” (Thon, 2016: 71).

certainly has to do with the absence of authorial comments, on the other hand, the author's effacement from the text does not automatically imply a cinematic narrative. Spiegel (1976: 6) insists on the notion of "concretized form", which is "a way of transcribing the narrative, not as a story that is told, but as an action that is portrayed and presented, that seems to reveal itself to the reader apart from the overt mediations of the author", and exemplifies his proposal through the character of Madame Bovary, who is seen before she is named, being introduced "amid a welter of inanimate objects and environmental detail" (19). However, if the attention to objects – also emphasised by Cohen (1979) and early theorists such as Epstein – is a key item of film narrative and, hence, of twentieth-century cinematic fiction, claiming that the "cinematographic form represents a historical offspring, a new and important outgrowth" (Spiegel, 1976: 54) of the concretized form stemming from Flaubert's novel is arguable. Much cinematic fiction would be conceived and would pursue opposing outcomes of those broadly attached to Flaubert and the later French naturalism. Above all, Spiegel's very problematic statement that "the camera, unlike the human eye, is unselective" (1976: 66) betrays a fundamental misreading. This is the core issue I will discuss in Chapter 2: that of the cinematic narrator, with the consequent need to re-address the influence of film form on literature on the level of narrative communication and artistic expression.²⁵

If it is true that early films (the so-called *tableaux*, and the 'actualities') were fundamentally objective, 'neutral' reproductions of scenes, their cold objectivity would soon be complicated when the new regime of narrative integration was set and filmmakers mastered a more complex grammar of shots, camera movements, angles, and focal length. The film immediacy became intertwined with hypermediacy, as David Bolter and Richard Grusin put it (1999). Moreover, while cinema appeared to represent the culmination of objective faithfulness, it was

²⁵ Metz (1974: 75) pointed out that "like all the arts, and because it is itself an art, the cinema is one-way communication". Obviously, with 'cinema', Metz meant 'film discourse'.

also immediately referred to human consciousness, irrational states and dreams. It was Henry Bergson, in *L'Évolution créatrice* (1907), who first compared our thought to the cinematic flow of images;²⁶ and Hugo Münsterberg, in *The Photoplay: A Psychological Study* (1916), developed one of the first theories of cinema focusing on the mental processes involved in film perception. Similarly, a number of writers and early filmmakers (e.g. Epstein) insisted on the oneiric power of film as a medium. Walter Benjamin wrote key pages on the advent of cinema as a mechanical art and also highlighted the impact of the camera on modern consciousness, because “evidently a different nature opens itself to the camera than opens to the naked eye. [...] The camera introduces us to unconscious optics as does psychoanalysis to unconscious impulses” (Benjamin, 1970: 238-9). As a powerful eye to grasp objective reality and a mirror reflecting subjectivity, the camera and the film form proved made up of idiosyncratic qualities. Michael North (2009: 11) remarked on the paradox that the camera, “celebrated from the first as objectivity incarnate, also came to serve as one of modernity’s most powerful emblems of subjectivity of perception and knowledge”. Therefore, to isolate the categories of ‘objectivity’ and ‘subjectivity’ does not allow for a preliminary discussion about the filmic quality in fiction, since neither can represent the kernel of film as a medium on their own. The ‘objective’ lens aimed at the external world, furthermore, implies a ‘subjective’ agent who is manoeuvring behind the camera, as a number of *auteurs*-filmmakers would later emphasise (e.g. Robbe-Grillet and Pasolini, see 5.4 and 5.5), and as the world of physics had already realised in the 1920s.²⁷ Thus, a two-fold aesthetic orientation of film as a fledgling medium emerges that implies both objectivity and subjectivity. This ambiguity has repeatedly

²⁶ “Tel est l’artifice du cinématographe. Et tel est aussi celui de notre connaissance. Au lieu de nous attacher au devenir intérieur des choses, nous nous plaçons en dehors d’elles pour recomposer leur devenir artificiellement” (Bergson, 1907: 331).

²⁷ I allude to the philosophical corollary of Heisenberg’s uncertainty principle (1927) and Bohr’s ‘observer effect’ (1928).

animated the rebound-effect debate. In contrast to Magny's points, for example, Clerc (1993) pointed out the importance of irrationality, abstraction and subjectivity in French cinema of the 1920s and drew on completely different categories that illuminate the sensational impact of non-narrative images on writers. In general, cinematic techniques and cinematic terminology have alternatively been used to describe, promote or bluntly reject traits of realism and antirealism, narrativity and anti-narrativity, objectivity and subjectivity in fiction as a result of the arrival of cinema. These aesthetic outcomes should not be taken as paramount criteria to define what is cinematic and what is not.

Moreover, the term 'cinematic novel' or 'cinematic fiction' at times has been used improperly, especially in the past. As Steven G. Kellman noted (1987: 468), "the term *cinematic novel* has become a rhetorical commonplace, as if there were no question about what is meant by *cinema* and what by *novel*". Cinematic traits have been observed in novels whose authors declared or refused any influence, or in novels that simply have cinema as a theme, such as Nathanael West's *The Day of the Locust* (1939) or Francis Scott Fitzgerald's *The Last Tycoon* (1941).²⁸ At any rate, the main studies on the topic point to particular phenomena in fiction that seem to be cinematic characteristics: 'behaviourist' style, simultaneity, multiperspectivism, discontinuous continuity, montage, camera-eye, 'adventitious detail' and 'depthlessness' (Spiegel 1976) have especially been attached to naturalist and modernist writers.²⁹ Some of these traits have also been highlighted in the literary production broadly linked with the French *école du regard* from the middle of the twentieth century (Clerc 1993; Morissette 1985).

²⁸ *The Day of the Locust* and *The Last Tycoon* are the most important among the many examples of the so-called 'Hollywood novel', a subgenre that grew in popularity from the 1910s to the 1940s. The plots of Hollywood novels are about characters achieving success or bound to misery following their dreams of fame in the film capital. More generally, for John Springer (2000: 63), this subgenre revolves around the theme of the "confusion of illusion and reality". See Eaton (2009) for a thorough survey of Hollywood novels, and Seed (2012) on West's and Fitzgerald's in particular.

²⁹ See Joyce's famous letter to Harriet Shaw Weaver on 24th June 1921 where he claimed his task was to write "a book from eighteen different points of view and in as many styles" (Ellmann, 1975: 284).

Therefore, a rather contradictory line seems to join the objectivity of French naturalism, the subjectivity implied in much literary modernism, and the outcomes of the *école du regard*. The latter, in particular, refused exactly the kind of objectivity that nineteenth-century realist and naturalist writers championed. However, whether extolled or rebutted, the aesthetics of objectivity typical of naturalism has been seen as a compelling starting point for many studies on the topic which have pointed to the change brought about by cinema: as Clerc claims, “à une époque où le roman lui-même vacillait sur ses bases naturalistes, le cinéma apportait la preuve éclatante que la vocation première des arts de représentation n’était peut-être pas de copier la réalité” (1993: 19); Giorgio Tinazzi additionally remarks that the new cinematic medium seems to have liberated literature from “la persistente tentazione del naturalismo” (2007: 50), by suggesting a new approach to reality, much as photography did in relation to realism in painting.

As it emerges from my necessarily concise survey, the topic of the influence or rebound effect of the film form on literature has produced hardly any widespread or shared discourse in academia, apart from agreement on a few key points, and despite other valuable attempts at systematisation (Elliott 2003; Moses 1995). Being conscious of the recurring “danger of loose talk about the cinematic influence on literature” (Eidsvik 1973), in the next chapters I will try to define the common, basic elements of the film form that have plausibly passed in much cinematic fiction, irrespective of movements and aesthetics, in order to define what I conceive as a ‘cinematic mode’ in fiction. Considering the issues arising from the rebound-effect debate, the status of the genre of a body of works demonstrating cinematic features is a key argument. A few studies have focused on genre in this respect (Rajewsky 2002; Moses 1995). However, a definition of cinematic fiction by means of genre categories is all the more useful as generic characteristics have proved to be so relevant for cultural production, transmission and comprehension. In literary and film criticism, in psycholinguistics, in hermeneutics and now in social-semiotic theories, genre is a crucial concept, a critical tool, a

prompt to aid orientation, or a necessary framework. I will address these issues in Chapter 3.

My aim will be to establish a correct generic framework for the assessment of the cinematic mode in fiction. In fact it seems that no one has ever explained the matter in terms of a ‘type-token’ relation.³⁰ That is, critics have regularly discussed tokens (the individual and alleged cinematic novels or short stories), but scarcely pointed to a type. This means that cinematic fiction, as a type, has remained ill-defined as far as its basic formal traits are concerned. To summarise, these are the most problematic items that have been put forth over time, and which risk being turned into mere clichés. The ‘filmic’ or ‘cinematic’ in fiction has often been attributed to:

- 1) the *present tense*; though the present tense *per se* offers no guarantee of filmic experience in the reader (and cinematic fictions have also been written in the past tenses);
- 2) the *montage* in general; but if montage is understood as a juxtaposition, the concept is transmedial, i.e. it crosses film borders (Eisenstein noticed it in Japanese ideograms); moreover, much French and Italian cinema from the 1940s to the 1960s questioned it. Are those novels inspired by these filmic models less cinematic, or not cinematic at all?
- 3) a ‘certain’ visual quality conveyed by the text, often summarised through the metaphor of the ‘eye’; but, to mention one striking example, in Viktor Shklovsky one finds the statement: “Poetry is [...] a mode of thinking by images” (Shklovsky, 1991: 1); and, clearly, visual quality is not only inherent in film, but also in painting, sculpture, photography;
- 4) the *camera-eye*; which is, again, merely a figurative association, whose use is particularly problematic when applied to pre-cinematic writers, or writers at the turn of the

³⁰ The type-token distinction is rooted in C.S. Peirce’s semiotics. “In the language of semantics, tokens instantiate (are instances of) their type” (Chandler, 2017: 57).

twentieth century, such as Conrad (“an eye that is without affect; that is, a camera eye, precisely”, see Spiegel, 1976: 61);

- 5) a ‘dry’ dialogue, in the style of Hemingway or Marguerite Duras; but very curt verbal sparring is already abundant in Alexandre Dumas’s *Le comte de Monte-Cristo* (1844-1846);
- 6) the use of specific cinematic techniques, such as travellings, pans, zooms, which are very hard to localise in written narratives when not overtly deployed.

On the one hand, these are probably the most relevant characteristics that confer a cinematic aura to a given text, and I will continue using them; however, I will show that these features need to interact and be combined with the temporal configuration of the text to result in strongly cinematised fiction. In other cases, these traits will merely signal a more limited cinematic dimension of the text. The availability of the literary narrator to imitate the cinematic narrator, thereby becoming para-cinematic on the discursive level, seems of paramount importance to convey these traits. I will discuss these problems in Chapter 2.

Overall, a renewal and strengthening of the theoretical background emerges as necessary, as also emphasised in recent publications (Bonsaver et al., 2008: 20). What is sometimes referred to as cinematic fiction simply has yet to find any theoretical definition. The aim of this research is to provide it, by re-discussing certain case studies and addressing others, thereby summarising a typology of the cinematic mode in fiction that accounts for the degrees of influence and the remediation of the film form on written narratives. This is the reason I have reduced my historical account to the bare minimum, relying on research already available. From my point of view, it has been more interesting to update the methodology and theoretical backbone through a consistent approach combining intermedia studies, classical and post-classical narratology, semiotics, genre theory, and reader-oriented perspectives. These methodological approaches are all integrated in my research, but particularly focused on in Chapter 1 (intermedia theories), Chapter 2 (narratology and semiotics) and Chapter 3 (genre theory), with reader-oriented perspectives as a background for all of them. These three

chapters are highly theoretical, and close readings follow for the rest of my analysis. Therefore, my comparative approach is initially to be understood as extensive: in Part I, I compare and integrate diverse methodologies in order to find some concepts and common threads in terminology that are useful for a definition of cinematic fiction; in Part II, I compare kinds of fiction from different periods and styles with reference to the film medium; in Part III, I provide an intermedial perspective on cinema and Italo Calvino in particular, an author who has repeatedly been praised for the ‘visibility’ of his writing. With the examples in part II and III, I illustrate how a number of cinematic techniques (montage, point-of-view-shots, shot/reverse-shots, establishing shots, match cuts, axial cuts, zooms, etc.) are remediated and combined to varying degrees in what I define para-cinematic narration. Therefore, my comparative approach also fulfils a narrower sense of the term comparison: in Catherine Brown’s words (2013: 68), “the act or results of paying a similar quantity and quality of attention to a discrete number of texts in order to determine their similarities and differences with regard to possession, lack, or degree of possession of a particular quality”. The quality I focus on in this research is the cinematic component – what I call the cinematic ‘mode’.

In Chapter 1, I discuss a number of recent theories of intermediality and social semiotics, and describe the difference between media and modes. The mode can be defined broadly as “a socially shaped and culturally given semiotic resource for making meaning” (Kress, 2010: 79) and is conceptually different from the technical medium that displays it (e.g. the audiovisual is a mode; cinema and television are media). Hence, I base my treatment of cinematic fiction on the concept of ‘intermedial reference’ (Rajewsky 2005, 2010; Wolf 2011), and set my analysis on three main categories of intermedial reference to the cinema (thematisation, evocation, implicit formal imitation). In Chapter 2, I discuss the theoretical postulate of the cinematic narrator and point out that the analysis of the ‘filmic’ in fiction must be based on a comparison of the agents that relay the narrative; I put forth my idea of a ‘para-

cinematic narrator'; hence, I use Harald Weinrich's concept of 'narrative relief' or 'putting-into-relief' (Weinrich 1978) to determine a common quality of film as a medium and, consequently, of cinematic fiction, enacted by para-cinematic narrators. In Chapter 3, I discuss the main tenets of genre theory and raise the point that cinematic fiction is based on a para-cinematic 'narrative contract' with the reader; I challenge the appropriateness of attributing cinematic qualities to pre-cinematic fiction. From a hermeneutic perspective, applying the concept of cinematic *a posteriori* to these works means insisting on their *significance*, thereby making a critical, but legitimate, *use* of them, but not addressing their historical *meaning* through a correct interpretation. I proceed to expound the difference between 'genres' and 'modes' in genre theory (cf. Fowler, 2002), where the 'mode' has a different meaning than it has in intermedia theories. I thereby explain my idea of 'cinematic mode in fiction', which I conceive as a distillation of film characteristics as a medium and as an art (i.e. the mode) which are re-mediated in fiction (i.e. the genre). In so doing, I connect intermediality theory and genre theory and two different meanings of 'mode'. The intermedial references to cinema and, particularly, the 'implicit formal imitation' of film in fiction can be described, through the theoretical framework of genre theory, with the concept of mode (i.e. as a distillation). In Chapter 4, I focus on a 'grey area' in terms of period, content and intermedial reference and account for the assumptions I have developed in the theoretical part. The three Italian case studies of this chapter (*Processi verbali*, *Cinematografo cerebrale*, *Quaderni di Serafino Gubbio operatore*) relate to the decades that precede and follow the establishment of a fairly codified grammar of the filmic language, and articulate seeming or actual cinematic devices. I describe them in terms of *proto-cinematic*, *pseudo-cinematic*, and *cinematic* fiction. In Chapter 5, I discuss singular case studies from American (*The Maltese Falcon*), French (*Film Parlé*, *La Jalousie*) and Italian literature (*Uomini e no*, *Teorema*, *Piazza d'Italia*, *Aracoeli*) that display the complexity and variety of the cinematic mode in fiction as well as the disparate aesthetic outcomes that it supports. I have conceived these very restricted examples in a straight synchronic perspective and have

merely organised my material following a chronological order for clarity's sake. They are mainly meant to highlight a *typology* of the cinematic mode in fiction. In this section, therefore, however fruitful it might be to address the historical *evolution* of the cinematic mode, I have not focused on a historical perspective, despite the fact that some of the works at issue show multiple contact points. However, this research clearly takes into account the evolution of film and is an attempt to connect cinematic fiction to its historical bases. At this stage, having found a common denominator to discuss the film form in fiction, my efforts are devoted to pinpointing and differentiating, singling out characteristics and certain plausible degrees of interference of the cinematic mode. Finally, Chapter 6 overturns such a perspective with a diachronic approach to the cinematic mode in Italo Calvino's writing. By pointing to specific cinematic traits and techniques in his fiction, I aim to show that the influence, remediation, or unconscious suggestions of cinema are part and parcel of his literary experience throughout, and appear in a number of works across four decades. In general, in all my examples, the cinematic mode emerges as an additional textual feature as well as a stylistic constraint, aimed at producing or strengthening certain narrative and stylistic effects (constraints have been recurrent expedients to shape art: e.g. the concept of beauty in Greek art; the codification of language and *topoi* in classical and neo-classical art; or the restrictions and rules to write fiction used by the French Ou.Li.Po. group in the 1960s).

Ultimately, cinematic fictions have often and mistakenly been patronised as impure or low-brow. Especially nowadays, a blockbuster is looked down upon with the accusation of not being 'proper' literature but rather a sort of expanded screenplay, and writers are accused of seeking marketability and easy money with clever books ready to be adapted into films. Beyond the lure of fame, and recalling that even nineteenth-century writers such as Charles Dickens or Fyodor Dostoyevsky wrote for money, this study actually addresses some established works of fiction that are fairly distanced in time, most of which have been rather solidly canonised. Aware of the risk of attributing misleading implications with the extensive

use of a critical tool (like a hammer that hits whichever shape reminds it of a nail – the ‘law of the instrument’), I will illustrate the cinematic and cultural backdrop of these and other works and shed light on the cinematic elements that surface from the texts.

– PART I –

THEORIES AND METHODS FOR A DEFINITION
OF THE IMPACT OF CINEMA ON FICTION

1. WHEN LITERATURE MEETS CINEMA

1.1. Media and mediality

In order to better approach the analysis of novel and film and, particularly, the formal influence exerted by the latter on the former, it is convenient to focus on the medial characteristics through which narrative is relayed in both. Before doing that, it is necessary to briefly discuss what media are and observe what media “can and cannot do” (cf. Chatman, 1980; Ryan, 2006: 19-20). However, a fully-fledged discussion of the concept of medium would exceed the scope of the present research. To avoid risk of a long-winded introduction, I will introduce the critical insights that support my discourse rather straightforwardly. The reader is invited to seek out more comprehensive discussion regarding the foundations of media culture and scholarship in other places.

Thus far, I have mostly retained the term ‘arts’ to indicate both literature and cinema, or fiction and film, and the concept of ‘text’, broadly-speaking, understood as “any aesthetic production that constitutes a ‘tissue’ of words, sounds, pigments, or images” (Méchoulan, 2015: 4), as these terms intuitively raise no problems in most cases of debate. However, the complex interrelationship between the two arts or semiotic texts is better approached in terms of medial interconnections thanks to new and advanced theoretical research: “once ‘medium’ instead of ‘art’ has become accepted as the basic category for the interdisciplinary discourse, the interrelationship of the various media is conceived of as ‘intermediality’” (Clüver, 2007:

30). Intermediality studies have gained wider recognition in recent times.³¹ For one thing, many of the established, as well as contested, aesthetic categories regarding the two arts begin to blur and fade as soon as the critical perspective is shifted. Assuming (or at least sharing) a perspective borrowed from media and intermedia studies allows literary criticism to integrate aesthetic evaluation with a wider range of criteria, thereby assessing phenomena that interplay with media borders more analytically. On the other hand, unexpected medial borders and features come to light that are in dire need of further exploration and careful treatment. However, far from being a hindrance to the intermedial approach, the concept of border “is the precondition for techniques of crossing or challenging, dissolving or emphasizing medial boundaries, which can consequently be experienced and reflected on as constructs and conventions” (Rajewsky, 2010: 64).

The new methodology and terminology borrowed from intermedial studies are key to my own understanding of the cinematic novel. Drawing on established scholarships, mainly rooted in the works of Marshall McLuhan (1994), William J.T. Mitchell (1994) and the social-semiotic theory of multimodality (Kress and Van Leeuwen 2001; Kress 2010), one can conceive of media features in terms of *modalities* and *modes* (Elleström 2010). As already mentioned, the mode as a semiotic resource is conceptually different from the medium that displays it. A mode features a set of qualities that are physically expressed by one or several

³¹ In the tradition of comparative studies there have been various strands of *interart* studies since the beginning of the twentieth century. Particularly, the focus has remained on literature, cinema, music and theatre; however, the field of interart studies has gradually been replaced with that of intermedial studies starting from the beginning of the 1980s under the pressure of cultural studies and new forms of hybrid artifacts and artistic performances (cf. Clüver, 2007; Higgins, 1984; Wolf, 2005). From the perspective of intermedial studies, intertextuality is a form of *intra-mediality* whereby cross-references are made within the same referencing medium (book to book; film to film etc.). Mikko Lehtonen (2000: 71), in turn, has defined intermediality as “intertextuality transgressing media boundaries”. As Rajewsky (2005: 44) has pointed out, “the sustained success and growing international recognition of the concept of intermediality, therefore, point less to new types of problems *per se* than (at least potentially) to new ways of solving problems, new possibilities for presenting and thinking about them, and to new, or at least to different views on medial border-crossings and hybridization”.

media; therefore, media are the material, physical supports (cf. Kress and van Leeuwen 2001: 22) by means of which we experience one or several modes. Modal resources, such as ‘speech’, ‘writing’, ‘sound’, but also ‘gesture’, ‘clay’, or ‘layout’, are thus also defined in terms of ‘affordances’ (cf. Gibson, 1979) of the mode and in relation to their social use.³² As a consequence, all modes reveal a specific cultural logic because they satisfy different requirements and interests by the members of a given community; societies ‘select’, as it were, specific modes, thereby showing “modal preferences: *this* mode is used for these purposes, *that* other mode for those other purposes” (Kress 2010: 82-3). Modes are therefore a way of meaning-fixing and are profoundly implicated in the making of ideologies, a process in which both producers and users are involved. The social use of modes also explains the lure of fashion, the creation of status symbols, or the logic that lies behind the definition of ‘normal’ in society.

³² “Different modes offer different potentials for making meaning. These differing potentials have a fundamental effect on the choice(s) of mode in specific instances of communication. *Writing* (in English, as in many other languages) has words, clauses, sentences, organized through *grammar* and *syntax*. It has graphic resources such as font, size, bolding, spacing, frames, colour. To *frame* its units, it has syntactic, textual and social-semiotic resources (e.g. *sentence*, *paragraph*, *textual block*, *genre*). [...] These resources have specific forms in different cultures. [...] The mode of *speech* shares aspects of lexis, syntax and grammar with *writing*. The material ‘stuff’ of *speech* however, sound, is entirely different from the *graphic stuff* of *writing*. Sound is perceived via the physiology of hearing; the graphic stuff of writing is received via the physiology of sight. [...] In a social-semiotic approach to mode, equal emphasis is placed on the *affordances* of the material ‘stuff’ of the mode (sound, movement, light and tracings on surfaces, etc.) and on the work done in social life with that material over often very long periods” (Kress, 2010: 79-80).

Thus, media should be understood as multimodal ensembles, and texts “are always multimodal” (Kress 2010: 157) in the broadest, semiotic meaning of the term.³³ Albeit enlightening, this model nevertheless seems to encompass an indistinct set of modes that are barely comparable with one another due to their broad dissimilarities. Modes are better described in terms of the four *modalities* whereby their mediality comes to be expressed and experienced: the *material modality*, the *sensorial modality*, the *spatiotemporal modality* and the *semiotic modality*, which constitute the “essential cornerstones of all media” and range “from the material to the mental” (Elleström, 2010: 15-6). The four modalities are thus to be understood as hypostases that allow the modes to be described and compared.³⁴ For example, as far as audiovisual and written texts are concerned, which are the modes at issue here, a set of modalities is shared in both to a certain degree: the material modality of both is normally a flat surface with visual characteristics (whereas in one case the text is composed of fixed signs, in the other it is composed of ‘moving images’ and sound waves). The two texts are fundamentally perceived through the sensorial modalities of sight and, to a different extent, of hearing (besides being generally ‘felt’); in both texts, the spatiotemporal modality expresses a

³³ The term ‘multimodality’ has also been used recently in literary criticism in a narrower meaning. See the use of the concept in Wolfgang Hallet (2009: 129): “Multimodality [...] denotes a type of novel that seems to have emerged visibly over the last twenty years and that is substantially different from the traditional novel which relies totally on the written word in printed form. While still relying to a considerable extent on the traditional language of the novel, multimodal novels incorporate a whole range of non-verbal symbolic representations and non-narrative semiotic modes”. Multimodal novels include in their narratives non-narrative elements such as photographs, letters, maps, diagrams, statistics, as well as different modes expressed, for instance, by images, colours, fonts. As Hallet points out, these insertions must be recurrent and have a diegetic role for the new genre to be created, because “readers [...] incorporate them in their cognitive construction of the narrated world and narrative meaning” (2009: 131). Multimodal novels such as W.G. Sebald’s *Austerlitz* (2001), or Mark Haddon’s *The Curious Incident of the Dog in the Night-time* (2003), and many others, show similar characteristics, i.e. they incorporate different modes, or the image of another medium. These novels are properly multimodal in this narrow sense. See also Alison Gibbons (2012).

³⁴ See also Thon (2016: 72-3), who points out that at least in contemporary narratology “there appears to be a common consensus that the concept of multimodality is particularly useful for describing the “semiotic resources” that define the mediality – and, hence, also the narrative limitations and affordances – of conventionally distinct media”.

fixed and organised sequence of signs and triggers a virtual spatiotemporal dimension. However, audiovisual and written texts fundamentally diverge in their semiotic modality, according to Charles Sanders Peirce's (1960: 156-73) semiotic categories of icon, index and symbol. These categories are recalled by Lars Elleström: audiovisual text is iconic and to a certain extent indexical, i.e. it mediates the content which is actually transmitted through relations of similarity and contiguity; the verbal text is symbolic, because its semiosis is enacted through alphabetical signs, i.e. conventional symbols. Sculpture, in comparison, consists of totally different modalities: it is tridimensional and usually experienced through sight and touch, it does not open much of a virtual spatiotemporality (at best it reveals a metaphysical reality) and, like the audiovisual text, is fundamentally iconic and to a lesser degree indexical. Hence, written and audiovisual text share, and are distinguished by, certain characteristics described in terms of the four modalities, similarly to all other modes. The formal influence of film on fiction can be traced according to the analogies in their material, sensorial and spatiotemporal modalities as well as to the fundamental divide in their semiotic 'stuff', as Gunther Kress would say.

Such abstract categories of modes and modalities are obviously carried out in our transient, culturally-shaped world where the meaning of 'medium' is only created by humans on the grounds of *qualifying aspects*: on the one hand, media reveal their "origin, delimitation and use [...] in specific historical, cultural and social circumstances" (*contextual qualifying aspect*) while also being created, used and recognised thanks to their "aesthetic and communicative characteristics" (*operational qualifying aspect*). This further distinction reflects the fact that "there is a strong tendency towards treating a medium as *a* medium, or an art form as *one* form of art, only when certain qualitative aspects can be identified" and that "such aspects are, of course, not eternally inscribed but formed by conventions" (Elleström, 2010: 25). One may accordingly discern between *basic media* and *qualified media*, that is between media "identified by their modal appearances" and media "that rely strongly on the two qualifying aspects"

(Elleström, 2010: 27), by always considering the “constructed character of any conception of ‘a medium’” and that “when we talk about ‘individual media’ we are actually talking about media that are *conventionally* perceived as distinct” (Rajewsky, 2010: 62). Thus, to keep focus on the topic at hand, audiovisual text and written text are basic media that constitute, or contribute to shaping and defining several qualified media such as television or press and, of course, film and fiction. At any rate, all terms merely refer to abstract ideas of media, even though they gain a cultural connotation when mentioned as qualified media, since they are originated, structured, justified, and experienced both contextually and operationally.

As a matter of fact, the actual creation of basic and qualified media occurs through *technical media*, which are defined “as any object, physical phenomenon or body that mediates, in the sense that it ‘realizes’ and ‘displays’ basic and qualified media” (Elleström, 2010: 30).³⁵ It is a shared idea, in fact, that we never encounter the abstract notion of ‘medium’ as such, but only its actual realisation (cf. Rajewsky, 2010). Technical media remind us that it is always important to keep technology in mind when discussing more general or abstract concepts: the printed and the digital book, and the analogic and the digital film (or camera) are quite different technical media with different affordances and constraints. Nonetheless, remarking on the usefulness and practicality of such distinctions in intermedial studies, Werner Wolf (2005: 253) pointed out that intermediality sees media “as conventionally distinct means of communicating cultural contents” and that they are “specified principally by the nature of their underlying semiotic systems”. Consequently, the material modality of a medium ultimately “consists of a latent corporeal interface that can be realized in actual manifestations by technical media” (Elleström, 2010: 30) and, because of its latency, it is liable to re-

³⁵ To speak of ‘physical medium’ (Clüver 2007) on the other hand, means to emphasise the natural more than the cultural and technical dimension of media, which actually seems to be the more relevant aspect as media are to be understood in relation to the human mind.

enactment under new and modified aspects in constantly updated technical media, without losing its own specificity. The material modalities of, say, written text, moving image, photograph or sound maintain most of their specificities regardless of their production, whether through a paper-made or digital book, an old or a 4K-technology screen, a monochrome or trichrome print, a wrecked gramophone or a hi-fi audio system. Even the evolution of typography is a source of great fascination in relation to this topic.

With regard to the cinema and the novel in particular, culture historians (e.g. Ong 2002; Watt 2000; Gaudreault 2012) have confirmed that their emergence and constitution took place through the gradual achievement of their sociocultural affordances, which have been connected to ritual patterns, interactivity and learning possibilities, as well as the creation of new communities of people who share interests. The printing revolution changed the approach to reading and writing and contribute to the emergence of the novel; however, the seventeenth-century novel was considered a protean, corrupting, ‘feminine’ genre; it took time to impose its form and variety of content and match the status of theatre and poetry. The ‘cinema’ itself was not born the day its technology appeared, but became a cultural phenomenon and an art only gradually.³⁶ Early films from the origins to the 1910s discomfited many members of the bourgeoisie (as well as many haughty intellectuals) because of the films’ trivial subjects and the forced proximity with the throng; the notion of film as art gradually emerged in the following decade thanks to the spread of film criticism. Moreover, in the modern and contemporary age, culture production and consumption has also been linked

³⁶ See Gaudreault and Marion (2002: 14): “It wasn’t until cinema’s practitioners arrived at a reflexive understanding of the medium and until the cinema achieved a certain degree of institutionalisation that the medium became autonomous. In this way the film medium could be said to have been born twice. [...] The history of early cinema leads us, successively, from the *appearance* of a technological process, the apparatus, to the *emergence* of an initial culture, that of ‘animated pictures’, and finally to the *constitution* of an established media institution”. See also Gaudreault (2012) for a recent development of such an insight and a polemical reconsideration of the ‘first’ birth of cinema.

to the fragmentation of tastes and habits and the sense of cultural ‘distinction’ (Bourdieu 1979). Limiting the impact of arts or media to their own technological birth or evolution is at best simplistic, for there is always a sociological implication in their circulation and transformation.

Speaking of fiction in the plain and common meaning of fictional written narratives arguably presents no risk of misunderstanding. To speak of moving images, audiovisual text, cinema, film, or film form is prone to more ambiguity. Accordingly, I will speak of *moving images* (i.e. with no sound) and *audiovisual text* when dealing with the basic medial features of film (also shared by old media such as the phenakistoscope, the zoetrope, the praxinoscope, the mutoscope, the kinetoscope, or more recent media such as the TV); I will also speak of *cinema*, when generally referring to the art of filmmaking or to the film as a qualified medium;³⁷ I will at times treat the cinema as a complex ‘apparatus’ (Baudry 1974; De Lauretis and Heath 1980) of machinery, spaces, ideological and gendered orientations, which are involved in the screening of movies; I will occasionally use the term ‘film’, in the technical sense of celluloid strip; I will specifically speak of *feature films* (full-length film) only in the rare cases in which such genre distinction is relevant to my discourse; and, rather, of *movies* when single and determined film narratives are mentioned regardless of their length. Finally, and most importantly, I will use the term *film form* (or *film*, simply) when referring to the open-ended complex of practices and stylistic outcomes of the cinematic art, referring in abstract to the range of aesthetic possibilities that the medium has historically opened, exploited and conveyed. Like *cinema*, *film form* can be understood as a qualified medium; when speaking of cinema, major emphasis is placed on its contextual qualifying aspect; in speaking of film form, the emphasis falls on its operational qualifying aspect; if *cinema* more generally describes all

³⁷ Therefore, by cinema I mean both analogic and digital cinema, as well its relation with both the big screen and the small screen of television.

those ideological underpinnings and conventions of content that regulate genres, *film form* more strictly describes formal aspects of the cinema that exist, to a certain extent, irrespective of content and genre, i.e. some conventional aspects of the cinematic language or semiosis that transcend the aesthetics of particular directors or cinematic movements.

1.2. Remediation of the film form in fiction

The kind of interart and intermedia phenomenon I research is grounded in the historical evolution of the arts and media, as well as in social perception, commercial and ritual uses, and the conceptual elaboration to which they are subjected. The impact of the early cinema on fiction and the influence that the younger art has exerted on the older are only instances of a range of disparate interrelationships and artistic intersections that find their own epistemological grounds in a long history of the mutual reshaping of arts, forms, media and devices, since all cultural objects have always been inextricably interwoven with one another. As Mitchell (1994: 5) stated in his now classical definition, “all media are mixed media, and all representations are heterogeneous; there are no ‘purely’ visual or verbal arts”; and as Jørgen

Bruhn (2010: 228) has recently stressed, “even the apparently monomedial text always consists of several modalities.”³⁸

The intersection and reshaping of medial characteristics has been described in terms of “remediation” (Bolter and Grusin 1999). The process of remediation expresses the competition amongst media in order to avoid obsolescence. Remediation entails a hypostatisation and exploitation of specific media features within competing media. Bolter and Grusin take contemporary culture as a speculative ground for their theoretical model and shed light retrospectively on previous dynamics. By pointing out that our culture “wants to erase its media in the very act of multiplying them” (1999: 5), they stress the double logic of remediation, that of immediacy and hypermediacy. Multimediality, and the great diffusion of electronic devices in relentless transformation, has brought attention to the key aspect – the driving force – of media development, that is people’s desire for immediacy, which is reflected in media configuration and in culturally-determined medial uses. This dynamic is readily observable nowadays, when digital media appropriate features of other digital or analog predecessors: “whenever one medium seems to have convinced viewers of its immediacy, other media try to appropriate that conviction” (1999: 9). This desire for immediacy leads media to strive for “a transparent interface” that “erases itself, so that the user is no longer aware of confronting a medium, but instead stands in an immediate relationship to the contents of that medium” (1999: 23-4). Yet, if the logic of immediacy seems to lead the

³⁸ Bruhn (2010: 229-30) has recently proposed the umbrella term of “heteromediality” to describe “any conceivable text” on the grounds that pure texts do not exist. Following some recent theories of multimodality, he reserves the term intermediality “to parts of heteromediality”, and articulates his insight as follows: “intertextuality defines the overall phenomenon of texts being mosaics of other texts (according to the now classic definitions of Barthes and Kristeva); heteromediality defines the existence of several medial modalities in all conceivable texts. Intermediality, then, is my term for one particular subgenre of heteromediality, characterized by the traces of more than one medium (either in combination, transformation or integration following Lund). Therefore, all texts are heteromedial, and they will always cite and will be cited by other texts (intertextuality); but only part of the immense category of heteromediality is intermedial in the restricted sense of the word”.

process of mediacy and mediatisation, the same logic is soon re-balanced or complicated by hypermediacy, that is the logic by which a certain immediacy is invested with new meanings, or becomes the object of meta-semiosis (i.e. the visualisation of page turning in digital books, the graphic visualisation of musical analogic devices with digital software, and so on).³⁹

While writing I myself am involved in the double logic, through the subliminal appeal and subtle features of my laptop: in the reduced height and enhanced smoothness of the keyboard, in the computer's processing speed, in the responsiveness of the user interface and the screen's transparency, constantly improved by the manufacturer, my desire for immediacy finds satisfaction, and my personal usage of the device simultaneously reaches the highest forms of hypermediacy in an everyday act of multitasking using tools such as the 'desktop'. Today's proliferation of mediated images, even the most visually trivial found in social media, is filled with acts of remediations for creative, or generically 'expressive', uses. To post a photograph modified with the 'cartoonize' tool, for example, entails the remediation of some basic and markedly stylised visual features of comics within the medium of photography, which is, in turn, an older medium now plunged into the digital era and an ever-evolving use of social networks, hosted and fostered by electronic devices.

Such a critical glance at digital technology retrospectively illuminates preceding dynamics, as already seen in relation to photography, pictorial impressionism and cinema. In fact, as far as the cinema's ancestors are concerned, photography did not perfect the technique of linear-perspective painting (cf. Crary, 1990), as its immediacy was soon hypermediated; other

³⁹ As Bolter and Grusin explain (1999: 33-4), "if the logic of immediacy leads one either to erase or to render automatic the act of representation, the logic of hypermediacy acknowledges multiple acts of representation and makes them visible". In other words, "the rhetoric of remediation favours immediacy and transparency, even though as the medium matures it offers new opportunities for hypermediacy" (1999: 60). For another contemporary example, see the remediation of diorama through photography in the practice of amateur artists Michael Paul Smith: <https://www.flickr.com/photos/24796741@N05/>; see also <https://petapixel.com/2013/10/14/life-like-miniature-scenes-shot-using-model-cars-forced-perspective-250-ps/>

devices such as the diorama, the phenakistoscope and the stereoscope, “characterized by multiple images, moving images, or sometimes moving observers, seem to have operated under both these logics at the same time, as they incorporated transparent immediacy *within* hypermediacy” (Bolter and Grusin, 1999: 37). Moreover, the logic of immediacy in visual arts and media remained dominant until the end of the nineteenth century and came to be challenged by modernism, as Clement Greenberg (1973) notoriously maintained.⁴⁰

The concept of remediation is essential to understanding cinematic fiction. As it becomes increasingly clear, “remediation offers us a means of interpreting the work of earlier media as well”, because the process is not only about newer media remediating older ones (and, particularly, digital media remediating their analog predecessors); on the contrary, since culture follows convoluted and sometimes unpredictable changes, remediation describes “a genealogy of affiliations, not a linear history, and in this genealogy, older media can also remediate newer ones” (Bolter and Grusin, 1999: 55). From this perspective, cinematic fiction appears an outcome of the remediation of film form as a ‘qualified medium’ in written narratives, and the plausibility of such an intermedial process is granted by the fact that the modern novelist “often comes to his craft with at least a semiconscious recognition” that his or her own writing can borrow from other art forms and, especially, from narrative art forms such as cinema, as Alan Spiegel (1976: 80) pointed out in the 1970s, when most narratological tools and intermediality theories were yet to come about.

Remediation is thus a particular kind of intermedial relation. However, the double logic that supports remediation may also be seen as working within the borders of a specific

⁴⁰ “Realistic, illusionist art had dissembled the medium, using art to conceal art. Modernism used art to call attention to art. The limitation that constitute the medium of painting – the flat surface, the shape of the support, the properties of pigment – were treated by the Old Masters as negative factors that could be acknowledged only implicitly or indirectly. Modernist painting has come to regard these same limitations as positive factors that are to be acknowledged openly” (Greenberg 1973: 68-9).

medium or medium-related art. By looking at the evolution of the novel, for example, it seems that the logic of transparency pushed the mediacy⁴¹ of the pre-Flaubertian novel gradually towards the kind of immediacy offered by the technique of narrative impersonality, notoriously achieved originally by Flaubert in the middle of the nineteenth century. One hundred and fifty years after that, the genre of autofiction has shown the hypermediated inversion of the same logic regarding authorial intrusion. In autofiction, the narrative seems to simulate the confidential report of life by what the reader imagines to be the author in the flesh, only to reveal or insinuate that the same narrative is falsified from within, and what first appears factual turns out to be fictional. The ostensible immediacy or transparency of the first-person narrative thus turns out to be the fake immediacy of a postmodern and hypermediated literary convention (or ‘narrative contract’, a term which will be explored in Chapter 3).⁴²

The same double logic of immediacy and hypermediacy can be traced within the development of film as art. From the photographic effect of immediacy, enacted by the considerable ‘transparency’ of the moving images in early films, the art of cinema has experienced a growing tendency towards manipulation. A variety of manipulations of the photographic image on the celluloid film are observable in Georges Meliès’s tricks and in rudimentary expedients used by early filmmakers to convey the special effects of the time, such as the ‘iris’, the keyhole shot, or other unusual perspectives carried out with the help of tailored panels positioned in front of the camera. Another case in point is the remediation of photographic and pictorial qualities in German cinematic expressionism, where, if the

⁴¹ In Franz Karl Stanzel’s theory of narrative (1971, 1984) the term ‘mediacy’ is a gradable concept and describes the process of narrative transmission by the narrator. The narrator mediates in two fundamental ways (teller mode/reflector mode): either the narrator more or less openly functions as a teller of the story, or s/he presents the story through the consciousness of a character, in which case there seems to be no narrator operating as a mediator. In the (varied) ‘reflector’ mode of narration “the illusion of immediacy” is more easily triggered (Stanzel 1984: 141).

⁴² For a recent contribution on autofiction, see Marchese (2014).

immediacy of the moving images was maintained, such immediacy was hypermediated through an alteration of natural light and realistic mise-en-scène. Ultimately, each piece of logic balances the other and even Hollywood continuity editing and other montage theories are consistent with the dialectics of immediacy and hypermediacy.

As I will demonstrate in Part II and III, certain features of film form have partly, or in a more integrated fashion, been remediated in twentieth-century fiction. Much of this remediation has tended towards introducing cinematic immediacy to the older structures of written narratives. This immediacy has introduced or strengthened some characteristics of temporality, visibility, and narrative segmentation. It has also fostered other specific narrative techniques, which in extreme synthesis have frequently been intended to contribute to a certain narrative *economy*, based on the film form. In other cases, the fascination with cinema and the specific contribution of the film form have been hypermediated in literary texts and therefore rendered explicit. Aware of the risk of dispersion, my examples will, nonetheless, be various and disparate so as to testify to a generalised permeability of the film form in fiction. This should by no means be surprising, since “the social dimension of immediacy and hypermediacy is as important as their formal and technical dimensions” (Bolter and Grusin, 1999: 73), and writers have plunged into the cinematic era for some time now.

1.3. Intermedial references

As Bolter and Grusin claim, media can re-shape their characteristics through the remediation of other media. Concerning the cinematic novel in particular, it seems necessary to understand and classify the actual occurrences of the medial and artistic interconnections that inform it. Recent studies in intermediality and transmedia narratology (Arvidson et al., 2007;

Rajewsky, 2002; Rippl, 2015; Ryan, 2005, 2006; Thon, 2016; Wolf, 1999) have contributed to a better understanding of the phenomena of transcending, referencing, merging, intersecting and overlapping between two or more media. Intermediality can be conceived in a ‘broad’ or ‘narrow’ sense (cf. Rajewsky, 2005) thereby reflecting ‘extracompositional’ and ‘intracompositional’ phenomena. Following Wolf’s typology (2005: 252-6), *transmediality* is a form of extracompositional intermediality including phenomena “that are non-specific to individual media” but imply a crossing of media borders, i.e. ahistorical formal devices that occur in more than one medium, such as narrativity, perspective, montage and so on. These phenomena are therefore medially unrelated and can be concretised in several media at the same time or in different periods. Transmediality also describes the migration of contents or archetypal subjects from medium to medium which have been exploited in myths, sacred texts, sagas, iconography, and also characterises a number of creative works in our age of cultural convergence (Jenkins 2006). In other words, transmediality is about “palpable similarities between heteromedial semiotic entities”. *Intermedial transposition* is another form of extracompositional intermediality but, unlike transmediality, it takes place when a medium recognisably acts “as an origin in a process of medial transfer” (2005: 253), even if partially or through a single specific device (e.g. the narrating voice). The most common case of intermedial transposition nowadays is adaptation of the novel into film.⁴³

Intracompositional intermediality, on the other hand, describes phenomena that are observable within a given referencing medium: *plurimediality* and *intermedial reference*. Plurimediality, in the case of illustrated novels, musicals, or the cinema itself as a typical

⁴³ See also Thon (2016: XVII), who speaks of ‘intermedial adaptations’ and, recalling Jenkins’s notion of convergence culture, emphasises the transgression of borders by “what may be described as *transmedial entertainment franchises*” in contemporary culture.

plurimedial art,⁴⁴ takes place “whenever two or more media are overtly present in a given semiotic entity” while remaining “discernible on the level of the signifiers”, so that an intermedial relation is added to a given work’s semiotic structure. In intermedial reference, on the contrary, the intermedial relation “does not imply the incorporation of signifiers of other media” and the medium or work displaying a reference seems to be “medially and semiotically homogeneous”, since the source medium is referred “covertly or indirectly”, that is to say “through signifiers and sometimes also signifieds pointing to it”. However, despite not being physically displayed in terms of its semiotic resources, the second medium becomes an integral part of a given work’s semiosis. In contrast with plurimediality, the other medium enters “as a conceptual rather than physical presence, and the base medium retains the character of a homomedial semiotic complex” (2005: 253-4). This is the case with ‘musicalised’ fiction (cf. Wolf, 1999) or photographic hyperrealism in painting or – what is at issue here – cinematised fiction. Certain instances of remediation, such as computer games, therefore show how the four forms of intermediality can interact.⁴⁵ Other instances of limited remediation involve fewer forms. The cinematisation or ‘filmicisation’ (cf. Rajewsky, 2002) of fiction thus falls into the more restricted domain of intermedial reference whereby “a given media product cannot use or genuinely reproduce elements or structures of a different medial system through its own media-specific means; it can only evoke or imitate them.

⁴⁴ This view is also shared by Thon (2016: 76): “I will treat the audiovisual representation of storyworlds in films as something like the ‘default case’ of multimodal storytelling in contemporary media culture”, where the term ‘multimodal’, in Thon’s phrasing, is perfectly synonymous with ‘plurimedial’.

⁴⁵ As Wolf (2011: 6) clearly states, “from a system(at)ic intermedial point of view these games can be analyzed by discussing their partial narrativity (a transmedial feature), their being derived (in part) from heteromedial artefacts such as novels (thus showing elements of intermedial transposition), their combination of several originally distinct media (plurimediality), as well as their reference to other media (e.g. in the imitation of filmic features)”.

Consequently, an intermedial reference can only generate an illusion of another medium's specific practices" (Rajewsky, 2005: 55).

To explore the phenomenon further, it is necessary to understand the contribution that intermedial references add to a given work's mediality:

Intermedial references are thus to be understood as meaning-constitutional strategies that contribute to the media product's overall signification: the media product uses its own media-specific means, either to refer to a specific, individual work produced in another medium (i.e., what in the German tradition is called *Einzelreferenz*, 'individual reference'), or to refer to a specific medial subsystem (such as a certain film genre) or to another medium *qua* system (*Systemreferenz*, 'system reference'). The given product thus constitutes itself partly or wholly *in relation* to the work, system, or subsystem to which it refers. (Rajewsky, 2005: 52-3).⁴⁶

I emphasise Rajewsky's term of 'meaning-constitutional strategies', because the practice of cinematisation, be it conscious or unconscious, fundamentally supports the narrative strategies deployed in the works of fiction I will discuss later, and contributes to defining the aesthetic in which they are produced. Thus, it is easy to see how one can also conceptually move from medial to aesthetic categories and explore ideological orientations, artistic aspirations, communicative models, sociological transformations in the readership and even – although not discussed here – marketing opportunities. In order to assess the influence of cinema, I will treat the film form as a system, that is to say as a 'qualified medium'. Therefore, I will draw comparisons through a synchronic approach and point out intermedial references on the grounds of the common and shared idea of what film has been throughout its evolution as an art. I will occasionally point to specific films, filmmakers and specific formal procedures as well, whilst also recognising the formal evolution of the medium as a background historical dimension to avoid anachronistic blunders. As Rajewsky (2005: 51) remarks, it is in fact

⁴⁶ The concepts of individual reference and system reference are derived from studies on intertextuality (see Broich and Pfister, 1985).

essential to take into account “historically changing possibilities for the functionalization of intermedial practices”. However, alongside particular and individual cross-references between specific writers and filmmakers, I will show that a parallel and generalised influence of the film form has impacted the form of some works of fiction under the aspect of intermedial references, drawing on basic and transferable features of the source medium as a system.

Rajewsky and Wolf provide substantially matching insights in elucidating the same range of phenomena despite using different terminology. A deeper exploration of intermedial references discloses a further terminological and, hence, conceptual refinement. Rajewsky (2005) has distinguished references in *thematisation*, *evocation* and *implicit formal imitation*. Wolf has meticulously defined them further.⁴⁷ These categories of intermedial reference can be applied to both popular and highly sophisticated works, different arts, and cultural contexts. Thematisation of cinema or film in fiction is observable in a number of novels revolving around the cinema industry, such as Luigi Pirandello’s *Quaderni di Serafino Gubbio operatore* (1925). Evocations of paintings in cinema are found in Pasolini’s famous scenes in *La ricotta*

⁴⁷ “Intermedial references fall into the following two main subforms: a) The first is explicit reference (or intermedial thematization, a term which is best used in the context of verbal media). Here, the heteromedial reference resides in the signifieds of the referring semiotic complex, while its signifiers are employed in the usual way and do not contribute to heteromedial imitation. Explicit reference is easiest to identify in verbal media. In principle, it is present whenever another medium (or a work produced in another medium) is mentioned or discussed (“thematized”) in a text as in discussions on art in an artist novel; b) as opposed to intermedial thematization, an alternative subform of intermedial reference is implicit reference or intermedial imitation, which elicits an imagined as-if presence of the imitated heteromedial phenomenon. There are various ways and varying degrees of intensity to realize this form, ranging from imitating references through partial reproduction (as in the quotation of song texts in a novel which make the reader remember the music of the song) to evocation (as in *ekphrasis*, which goes beyond the mere thematization by describing the heteromedial object) to formal imitation (as in the imitation of sonata form in a poem or “musicalized” novel). [...] As opposed to explicit reference but also to other implicit variants of partial reproduction and evocation, the characteristic features of formal imitation consist of an attempt at shaping the material of the semiotic complex in question (its signifiers, in some cases also its signifieds) in such a manner that it acquires a formal resemblance to typical features or structures of another medium or heteromedial work” (Wolf, 2011: 5-6).

(1963),⁴⁸ where the two Depositions represented in the film allude to Rosso Fiorentino's and Pontormo's paintings.⁴⁹ Evocation of speech in music is observable in Pink Floyd's song *Waiting For the Worms*, included in the concept album *The Wall* (1979), where the frenzied voice on the megaphone in the final part (Roger Waters' voice) evokes a Nazi speech.⁵⁰ Implicit formal imitation of musical fugue is found in Giuseppe Pontiggia's *L'arte della fuga* (1968), where the text's articulation is based on the contrapuntal technique. Since my discussion about cinematic fiction is primarily concerned with the cinematisation of the narrative discourse rather than the narrative content of the story (cf. Chatman, 1978), it goes without saying that my main interest is in the implicit formal imitation of film. In this case, the effect of cinematisation brings about sensations of 'illusion'⁵¹ and 'immersion',⁵² recalling the narration in film form and the cinematic experience. By contrast, mere thematisation and evocation hardly trigger any cinematic effect, unless they are deployed in a context where a formal imitation is being performed. I will investigate the crucial aspects of imitation and re-

⁴⁸ *La ricotta* is an episode of *Ro.Go.Pa.G.*, a film Pasolini co-directed with Jean-Luc Godard, Ugo Gregoretti and Roberto Rossellini.

⁴⁹ Rosso Fiorentino, *Deposizione dalla croce*, oil on wood, Pinacoteca comunale, Volterra, 1521; Pontormo, *Deposizione dalla croce*, oil on wood, Chiesa di Santa Felicita, Firenze, 1525-1528.

⁵⁰ The case of Paolo Nutini's recent pop song *Iron Sky*, included in his album *Caustic Love* (2014), is different: here the original excerpt from the final speech in Chaplin's *The Great Dictator* (1940) is appropriately cut, edited and embedded into the track and serves as an example of plurimediality.

⁵¹ In regards to 'illusion', Rajewsky points out that the concept "has been developed mainly in the context of realist narrative". However, what matters here is not "an aesthetic illusion that is obtained at the level of the 'reality' presented by, say, a text". Rather, illusion describes "an analogy between (in this case) a text's and another medium's respective principles, rules of communication, and strategies. Both these conceptions share the character of a simulation of experience; in the first, however, it is the *histoire* which is at stake, whereas the second concentrates on the *discours*" (Rajewsky, 2005: 54-5). In Chapter 2, I will be examining the commonalities and differences in written and filmic narratives in terms of their discourse, that is to say their mediacy.

⁵² In relation to book reading, various terms have been used to describe the reader's involvement in the narrative world, such as 'transportation' (Gerrig 1993), 'performance' (Iser 1978), and 'imaginative re-centering' (Ryan 1991). 'Immersion' has been investigated more recently as an umbrella term in theoretical contexts related to multimedia environments (cf. Schaeffer and Vultur, 2010). For my purposes, Kendall Walton's (1990) idea of mimesis and immersion as a 'game of make-believe', which is also evidently linked with literary and cinematic genres, is particularly important. Immersion in film experience has also been recently studied in relation to the embodied simulation triggered by mirror neurons (Gallese and Guerra 2015). For a very recent newspaper article reporting developments in virtual reality see Toniutti (2017).

formalisation of film in fiction in Chapters 2 and 3, but wish to emphasise here the first one which emerges from the typology illustrated so far: the possibility of a para-cinematic effect seems inversely proportional to the explicitness of the intermedial reference. Although counterintuitive, this is possibly due to the activation of mental schemata and scripts that have previously been learned by the recipient and come to be stimulated by certain narrative configurations.⁵³ As Rajewsky remarks,

despite their conventionality and constructedness, these variable conventional ‘ideas’ and concepts associated with specific individual media are nevertheless at one’s disposal, both for the production and inner functioning and the reception of a given medial configuration. Conventional and constructed as they may be, they are still available for partaking in the constitution of a media product’s overall signification. (Rajewsky, 2010: 61)

In the case study sections of this research, I will use these criteria to illustrate cinematic traits in a range of works. What is clear by now is that the notions of influence and convergence used in the past, and still currently deployed in critical discourses, are too ill-defined to assess the enactment of filmic forms and solutions in fiction. The notions of influence and convergence can ultimately be replaced by critical terms able to articulate a more precise and nuanced variety of formal and generic features.

⁵³ For an extensive survey on schemata theories, see Catherine Emmott and Mark Alexander (2009), who provide the following definition: “Schemata are cognitive structures representing generic knowledge, i.e. structures which do not contain information about particular entities, instances or events, but rather about their general form. Readers use schemata to make sense of events and descriptions by providing default background information for comprehension, as it is rare and often unnecessary for texts to contain all the detail required for them to be fully understood” (411). Obviously, schemata are also activated when subjects deal with other forms of representation, such as the visual arts. Schemata and, particularly, ‘scripts’, which are temporally-ordered schemata, supply the gaps in the recipient’s knowledge. Because schemata are “situational and socioculturally dependent” (412), I argue that new schemata have also been introduced with cinema culture, with cinematic genres and with the spread of film form, so that readers in the cinema era have increasingly had them at their disposal.

2. CINEMATISATION

2.1. The narrator in film and cinematic fiction

A key factor regarding the making, conveying and experiencing of stories is certainly who or what expresses the narrative. Or, reversing the problem: which narrator is entailed in a specific narrative? With regard to cinematic fiction, certain questions arise: Do narrators behave or tend to behave like cameras in some modern and contemporary works? Is ‘camera-eye’ the narrative situation of the cinematic mode in fiction, as was implicitly argued in past debates? How can one assess an alleged cinematic component in writing? Is it really possible to do so precisely? What changes in the act of reading cinematic novels? In this chapter, I will assume a narratological approach and investigate specific narrative situations pertaining to written narratives that contain or display cinematic features. Before entering into analysis, I will again clarify my terminology, since narratology has been a minefield of sensitive and often overlapping labels. I will conduct an essential and necessary exploration of fundamental concepts such as narrator, implied author, focalisation, and ocularisation to find satisfactory theoretical tools to articulate my idea of the cinematic mode in fiction. It will become apparent that certain terms derived from film narratology and other areas of study are needed to accurately deal with cinematic features in literary texts. As far as cinematic fiction is concerned, it is a possibility that cinematic schemata may be triggered or at least facilitated by a literary narrator imitating the cinematic narrator.

The notion of narrator as a transmedial concept is being debated presently in cognitive and transmedial narratology (cf. Thon, 2016). As readers or spectators, we may sense the presence of an agency conveying the narrative to a varying degree. Yet, whereas in literature the

presence of an agent organising and recounting the story for the reader, even when concealed, appears to be quite obvious and established (at least since Stanzel's studies, 1971, 1984), the matter has long been debated in relation to cinema. However, although there are issues with postulating non-represented narrators in, say, videogames, an important general idea that is applicable to cinema and literature is that narrators can show or conceal their presence while maintaining their status or constitutive function within the narrative. In fiction, we tend to perceive a natural 'voice' speaking throughout the text; film form, instead, somehow 'speaks cinema' (Jost 1987) – it speaks by means of objects, figures, and ambiences that have been previously prepared, framed in moving images, put in a sequence, and which seem to unfold by themselves. Some narratologists have considered the postulate of a cinematic narrator of no use and have pushed this notion outside the domain of film narratology. Performed stories and dramatic representations would be non-narrated and therefore imply no narrator.⁵⁴ Another group of narratologists have insisted on the need to posit a superior agency in film narrative.⁵⁵ Many of them have reworded Albert Laffay's (1964) idea of a *grand imagier* shaping film narration. Christian Metz (1973, 1974) had already addressed the issue of the narrator in terms of *énonciation*, following a key idea that harkens back to Émile Benveniste (1966). Metz pointed out that, in cinema, the problem is the narrator has no spatial collocation (or deixis): apparently, the filmic narrator is not coincident with the camera.⁵⁶ Seymour Chatman put

⁵⁴ Following Genette's first insight (1972, 1983), the concept of narrator cannot be applied to film. Similarly, Brian Henderson (1983), David Bordwell (1985) and Edward Branigan (1984, 1992) have countered the idea of the cinematic narrator as it seems too closely derived from literary narratology, as well as being burdened by a misleading prejudice: "To give every film a narrator or implied author is to indulge in an anthropomorphic fiction", writes Bordwell (62).

⁵⁵ Such an agency has been given different labels: 'intrinsic narrator' (Black, 1986), 'ultimate narratorial agency', 'supra-narrator' (Tomasulo, 1986: 46), 'superordinate instance' (Lothe, 2000: 30), 'filmic compositional device' (Jahn 2003), 'organising consciousness', 'heterodiegetic narrator' (Fulton, 2005: 113), and 'audiovisual/visual narrative instance' (Kuhn 2009).

⁵⁶ See Sabine Schlickers's (2009) use of the term "camera" – in brackets – to express a more sophisticated narratorial function.

forth the notion of a ‘presenter’ of stories with a precise function: “the cinematic narrator presents what the cinematic implied author requires” (1990: 30), because “cinematic narrators are transmitting agents of narratives” (132).⁵⁷ Similarly, Gaudreault (2009) proposed the awkward but enlightening notion of a *film mega-narrator* that would be the result of two functions contributing to its semiotic system: ‘monstration’ and ‘narration’.⁵⁸ This is the key conceptualisation to assess cinematic novels and short stories on a formal level.

In Gaudreault’s model, a film cannot but be a fact of diegesis; film narrative is conveyed by a narrator; “there are no stories without a storytelling instance” (Gaudreault and Jost, 1999: 45).⁵⁹ As Gaudreault demonstrates, building upon the studies of film historian Tom Gunning, three more precise sub-instances, or sub-functions, operate in film form: the *profilmic monstrator*, the *filmographic monstrator* and the *filmographic narrator*. The ‘profilmic monstrator’ is the function responsible for the *mise en scène* (e.g. setting, lights and so on), and for this reason can first be considered as the cinematic equivalent of the theatrical monstrator; it reflects a ‘putting in

⁵⁷ See also Marie-Laure Ryan (2005) on the concept of presentation.

⁵⁸ These categories hark back to the old concepts of ‘mimesis’ and ‘diegesis’, which were re-actualized in Percy Lubbock’s *The Craft of Fiction* (1921) under the name of ‘showing’ and ‘telling’, following a previous suggestion by Henry James.

⁵⁹ As remarked by Paul Ricoeur in his preface to the book, Gaudreault returns to Plato’s and Aristotle’s original Greek texts “with exemplary precision” (2009: XII) to clarify that the diegesis-mimesis opposition has been a modern distortion of Plato’s concepts of: *happle diegesis* (‘simple narrative’), that is the recounting of events and actions through the voice of a narrator; *diegesis dia mimeseos* (‘narrative expressed through imitation’); and *diegesis di’amphoteron* (‘narrative combining both forms’). In ancient times, these forms of diegesis brought about three basic genres: dithyramb; tragedy and comedy; and epic. As Gaudreault points out, Aristotle’s commentary on Plato fundamentally adds the idea that diegesis would be a fact of representation – in Greek, again, *mimesis*, which is a polysemic word; however, poetic representation would be relayed through diegesis following Plato’s categories. For Gaudreault (2009: 8), the opposition between mimesis and diegesis is “the hole in the net of narratological theory” because “for Plato mimesis was not, contrary to what is too often claimed, in opposition to diegesis. Rather, it is simply one of the forms that diegesis can take”. Similarly, “mimesis and diegesis are not opposite categories in Aristotle either. Aristotle, with inverse reasoning to Plato’s, saw diegesis as one of the forms of mimesis”. For a thorough explanation of the issue, see Chapter 4 of Gaudreault’s book. The misreading of Plato’s and Aristotle’s texts even affected Genette when he placed theatre outside the domain of diegesis. On narrative and drama, see also Brian Richardson (1987, 1988), Manfred Jahn (2001), Monika Fludernik (2008) and Ansgar Nünning & Roy Sommer (2008).

place'. But the profilmic monstrator also carries out a transformation on the reality due to its mechanical apparatus, frame by frame: it bears the traces of the physical act of camera recording. The 'filmographic monstrator' is the function responsible for the 'putting in frame', it involves camera mobility, angle, focal length, aperture size and perspective. Whereas the profilmic monstrator is fundamentally the same in theatrical representation, the filmographic monstrator is an all-cinematic function. The interaction of these two functions allows the profilmic to be shown, and constitutes the 'film mega-monstrator', which is the function responsible for the 'putting into film'. As Gaudreault explains (2009: 94), "this second-level form of monstration, filmographic monstration, is distinct from the first level, that of simple profilmic monstration, in that it too, in a sense, is able to inscribe the *viewer's reading*; it too is the work of an *intermediary gaze*". Hence, the filmographic monstrator is a crucial function that is inherent in the filmic mode.⁶⁰

Monstration is an initial and basic form of narrative, which is highly obvious in early films. What creates complex narratives, then? In Gaudreault's model, this task is fulfilled by the 'filmographic narrator', who is responsible for the 'putting in sequence' – i.e. the montage. With montage, however rudimentary it may be, the filmographic narrator manipulates time and triggers more articulated temporal relations.⁶¹ As part of the editing, montage is part of the post-production process: thus, the filmographic narrator is able to detach itself from the contingent reality in order to express complex narratives, including manifold refined

⁶⁰ Chatman, for his part, speaks of "cinematography" (1990: 135) to explain substantially the same concept, but without any rigorous internal subdivision as in Gaudreault. Note this is what Jean Epstein had already understood: "The camera lens is [...] an eye endowed with inhuman analytic properties. It is an eye without prejudices, without morals, exempt from influences. It sees features in faces and human movements that we, burdened with sympathies and antipathies, habits and thoughts, no longer know how to see. For anyone who even briefly considers this statement, every comparison between theater and cinema becomes impossible. The very essence of these two modes of expression is different. Thus, the other original property of the cinematic lens is its analytic power. Cinematic art ought to depend on it" (cf. Keller and Paul, 2012: 292).

⁶¹ See also Jost (1987: 35) on this point.

intellectual overtones (Eisenstein's theory of montage is an example). Therefore, film diegesis is the product of a compounded agency that relays the narrative through the complementary acts of monstration and narration. Such an extradiegetic, overarching and non-personified agency is found in the film *mega-narrator*, whose notion reflects that of the *fundamental narrator* in literary narratology.⁶²

In Gaudreault's model, one primary extradiegetic narrator underlies literary and filmic narrative, reflecting the fundamental act of enunciation. Accordingly, any agent relaying framed or sub-narratives, as well as all homodiegetic and autodiegetic narrators are “delegated narrators” (Gaudreault 2009: 116).⁶³ In literature, all delegated narrators, no matter how visible they are or how relevant their role may be overall, are subordinate to the main agent responsible for describing characters and conveying the narrative. Gaudreault's fundamental narrator (and the mega-narrator in film) should not be confused with the notion of implied author. As Bortolussi and Dixon (2003: 76) pointed out, in fact, “the narrator is constructed on the basis of the text, while the author representation may also be influenced by extratextual information concerning the historical author”. Gaudreault's fundamental narrator, which is quite an abstract entity, is fully textual (whether it is drawn from audiovisual

⁶² The idea of fundamental narrator is grounded in past theories, such as Genette's discussion of 'diegetic levels' (Genette, 1972: 238; 1980: 228), or Richard Aczel's idea of the narrator as a bundle of narrative functions (Aczel 1998). In Genette's theory, there is always an extradiegetic narrator who narrates the diegetic primary storyworld (this is the classic case of extradiegetic-heterodiegetic narration). Secondary intradiegetic narrators, as well as all further narrators, are anchored to such a diegetic primary level and can narrate about a metadiegetic storyworld in which they are located (cf. Genette, 1980: 227-34; 1988: 84-95). The argument is still debated, and one of the most recent and valuable attempts at systematisation has been conducted by Thon (2016). In order to overcome terminological confusion, he proposes the term of 'hypodiegetic' instead of the Genettean 'metadiegetic' when it comes to narratives recounted within a narrative or, in effect, sub-narratives. Further criticism against the necessity of always postulating a fictional narrator that is distinct from the author has been put forth by Susan S. Lanser (1981), Ann Banfield (1982), Richard Walsh (1997, 2007), Andrew Kania (2005), Sylvie Patron (2009) and Tilmann Köppe & Jan Stühring (2011).

⁶³ Gaudreault clarifies his model examining the narrative structure of Nikita Mikhalkov's film *Oci Ciombie* (*Dark Eyes*, 1987). I add that another striking example is Bergman's *Smultronstället*, (*Wild Strawberries*, 1957), where a fundamental narrator is clearly behind the autodiegetic recount of old Professor Isak Borg.

or verbal narration), whereas the implied author is not. It is a disembodied agent operating in written and filmic narratives, “an agent with no name [...], one that arranges and puts things in place. This prevents it, irreducibly, from saying ‘*I*. [...]’ This *impersonal* (or, rather, *apersonal*) agent cannot, because it is not acted out, introduce itself” (2009: 120). This is not a casual clarification in terms of cinematic fiction: it is the narrator who enacts cinema-derived features in cinematic fiction; however, the possibility of referring to these textual features as cinematic references is pre-conditioned by the implied author of the text.⁶⁴ In Chapter 3, I will discuss the impracticability of anachronistic approaches that attribute cinematised writing to authors of the pre-cinematic era.

⁶⁴ Despite the criticism raised by some narratologists such as Shlomith Rimmon-Kenan (2002), the concept of implied author is still widely shared, and so I will not go into any further detail here. The idea of implied author is grounded in Russian Formalism and has found a decisive formulation in Wayne Booth (1961); more recently, it has been reproposed by Marisa Bortolussi and Peter Dixon under the name of ‘represented author’ (2003: 76): through the work of art we can never access the real author’s mind, we can only catch (or even misunderstand) an implied person depending on our culture, literacy and background. For a recapitulation from the origins to the present debates, see Hans-Herald Kindt and Tom Müller (2006), Wolf Schmid (2013) and the dedicated issue of journal ‘Style’ (Richardson, 2011). See also Bennett (2005) more generally on ‘author’ and ‘authorship’; and Claassen (2012), who provides updated evidence through empirical studies on the role of the author in the reader’s mind. In relation to cinema, see also the criticism about implied single authorship in film production and regarding the actual auteurism fostered by the *auteur* theory in Berys Gaut (1997), who concludes that “there are multiple actual and constructed authors of mainstream films” (167-8). Thon (2016: 138) proposes to substitute the concept of implied author with that of ‘hypothetical author’ or ‘hypothetical author collective’, because the term implied author “suggest(s) a unity and homogeneity of the authorial construct in question that seems inappropriate at least in the context of a transmedial narratology that is primarily concerned with (often) collectively authored multimodal narrative works”. Note that even books, to a certain extent, would be collective works in Thon’s perspective. Therefore, the implied, represented, ‘abstract’ (Schmid 2010) or ‘hypothetical’ (Thon 2016) author is the mental idea of the flesh-and-bone author or the group of real authors everyone individually perceives when experiencing a story.

I shall not delve further on such an intriguing topic here.⁶⁵ I shall only observe that, if the fundamental narrator (and its equivalent in cinema, the mega-narrator) at this level of abstraction loses its anthropomorphic traits, gender and social status, this does not mean that its ‘slant’ disappears. Chatman (1990: 154) explains that “like literary narrators, cinematic narrators have their slant”, as readily exemplified by Hollywood or Soviet films, with their ideological views of the world or gendered implications. He also uses the term ‘perceptual slant’ in place of point-of-view-of-the-camera in the cinema. The perceptual slant of the camera indeed renders Gaudreault’s idea of mega-monstrator: “we must avoid the metaphor that the camera ‘sees’ the events and existents in the story world at such and such distance, from such and such angle. Rather, it *presents* them at those distance and angles”, writes Chatman (1990: 155). I wonder whether it is better to talk of camera affordance instead of camera gaze, as the fundamental or mega-narrator modulates all narrative information and is *always* extra- and heterodiegetic. The problem lies in linking para-cinematic narrative strategies in fiction with the imitation of the narratorial function in film. To do so, one needs to go deeper into the range of possibilities at the cinematic narrator’s disposal.

The fundamental narrator organises the amount of information to be relayed on the basis of different narrative strategies. If the questions ‘who knows?’ and ‘who speaks?’ notoriously pertain to focalisation, the questions ‘who sees?’ and ‘who hears?’ pertain to ‘ocularisation’

⁶⁵ Thon (2016: 143-4) explains his general concern about similar standpoints. See the section dedicated to the narrator as a transmedial concept and further passages: “Quite a part from the question whether it is more plausible to postulate some version of the ‘implied author’ or a nonrepresented ‘narrating instance’, then, it seems rather clear to me that we certainly do not need to postulate *two* (or even more) nonrepresented ‘communicating instances’ of this kind” (379). Ultimately, Thon speaks of *narratorial representation* with regard to fictional narrative representations and *non-narratorial representation* with regard to audiovisual (film), verbal-pictorial (comics) and interactive (videogames) representations (153).

and ‘auricularisation’ of narrative, as François Jost put it (1987, 2004) in relation to film.⁶⁶

Focalisation determines the cognitive relation between narrator, narratee and characters displayed locally or throughout the narrative; ocularisation and auricularisation in film determine what is provided by the cinematic narrator and conveyed to spectators. Characters obviously see and hear the storyworld around them, within the representation; however, stories have always been narrated to benefit someone. The one who is ‘called’ to see and hear is obviously the person experiencing the story: necessarily, the viewer in front of a screen (cinema, television, tablet etc.); the reader, to varying degrees, with a paper or digital book in hand; the first, by virtue of that agency which in film is so subtle (the camera slant, the film *mega-monstrator*), the latter by activating cinematic schemata in his or her mind which are triggered through words.⁶⁷ However, different recipients produce different visualisations and the process itself does not summarise the entire complex of narrative transmission in both

⁶⁶ With regard to focalisation, I follow the Todorov-Genette line: in zero focalisation the narrator displays a broader knowledge than that of characters (narrator > character); in internal focalisation the narrator displays a knowledge equal to that of a given character (narrator = character); in external focalisation the narrator displays a smaller knowledge than that of characters (narrator < character) (Genette, 1972: 206ff.; 1980: 189ff.). Extensive literature has been produced on the concepts of ‘point of view’, ‘perspective’ and ‘focalisation’. For a recent and comprehensive survey of the topic, see Burkhard Niederhoff (2009a, 2009b), as well as Peter Hühn, Wolf Schmid & Jörg Schönert (2009). For the purposes of the present study, see also Thon, who points out that “it is quite common to conceptualize ‘point of view’, ‘perspective’, and ‘focalization’ as multidimensional or, perhaps, ‘multiaspectual’ concepts in classical and contemporary narratology” (2016: 246). Although I agree that a multidimensional conceptualisation of ‘point of view’ or ‘perspective’ – I use the two terms synonymously – is needed, nevertheless, by following the communicative-enonciative model I cannot but reaffirm the importance and terminological usefulness of the concepts of ‘focalisation’ and ‘ocularisation/auricularisation’. These latter terms refer to the relation between the extradiegetic level in which the fundamental narrator lies and the intradiegetic storyworld populated by characters that the narrator conveys. In enonciative theories, the full relevance of the term ‘perspective’ holds, as it gives account of the subjectivity of all beings represented in the storyworld. Therefore, I admit and will make occasional use of terms such as ‘perceptual perspective’, ‘epistemic perspective’, ‘evaluative perspective’, ‘motivational perspective’ and ‘emotional perspective’ (Eder 2008) as long as these refer to the intradiegetic level of the narrative discourse. On the other hand, I will continue to use the terms of focalisation and ocularisation/auricularisation to describe the way in which the story is relayed by the primary narrator to the recipients (readers or spectators).

⁶⁷ Compare this with Branigan’s claim that the use of POV shots implies “the activity of narration has been transferred to a character within the narrative” (Branigan, 1984: 57), which is incompatible with the narratological enonciative line which I draw on.

films and written narratives. On the other hand, sounds are an inherent part of stories, just as they are in our real lives.⁶⁸

Jost distinguishes several categories of ocularisation: (1) in *zero* ocularisation the spectator sees the storyworld directly without any mediation by the character (so that one may have ordinary cases of *masked* enunciation, which is very common in films, and cases of *marked* enunciation when the camera or monstrator displays or even emphasises its enunciation, as in aerial travellings ending up in close-ups); (2) in *internal* ocularisation the spectator sees what a character objectively sees (a simple, rather static POV shot); *primary* internal ocularisation is the sub-case of POV shots displaying traces of someone who is looking at something (e.g. optical deformations, effects of movement, body parts in over-the-shoulder shots); *secondary* internal ocularisation is the sub-case of the image of a character looking at something followed by the image of the object that is looked-at, and so involving montage. Ultimately, as Jost (1987: 77) remarks, “il n’y a que deux solutions: *ou la caméra vaut pour un regard* – et je parle d’ocularisations internes, primaire ou secondaire – ou elle *ne vaut pas pour un regard* d’une instance diégétique (ocularisation zéro)”.

Given the broad possibilities of the medium, auricularisation in films is far more complicated than ocularisation and I will not go into that here. What matters is that, similarly

⁶⁸ “Converging evidence from cognitive and neuro-psychological studies shows that visualisation (imaging) while reading has cognitive and affective consequences that are keyed to the interconnected variables of reader and text. Standardised questionnaires and personal interviews indicate that some individuals habitually visualise in reading and other activities, while others visualise little and deploy a more verbal style of response. The distinction between visualisers and non-visualisers is experimentally important, as some researchers demonstrate that visualisation has an effect only when the subjects are distinguished from one another based on questionnaires about the vividness of their imagery and how frequently they use it. Readers also differ in their beliefs as to whether visualisation is an appropriate reading strategy” (Esrock, 2010: 633; see also Esrock, 1994). Ellen Spolsky coined the term ‘iconotropism’, which is “a gargantuan overgeneralization, hypothesizing that human beings feed on pictures, metabolize them – turn them into nourishment – because we need the knowledge they provide. We turn toward pictures when they are available, we imagine them if they are not, and we produce them if we can” (Spolsky, 2004: 16). These claims have found agreement in embodied-simulation theories and tend to be aligned with the concept of storyworld as is currently used in narratology.

to ocularisation, auricularisation in film is determined by the relationship between sound and characters and is often ‘anchored’ to ocularisation. In novels, auricularisation follows the same pattern of ocularisation and therefore is divided into three categories (zero, primary, secondary). Since in literature there is no sound, but a very limited ‘selection’ of specific sounds that the narrator conveys for descriptive purposes, zero auricularisation is far more unusual than it is in cinema; therefore “tout évocation sonore spécifiée dans le contexte où évolue un personnage est naturellement mise au compte du champ perceptif de celui-ci. Une fois de plus, l’ocularisation ancre l’auricularisation” (Jost, 1987: 114).

These critical terms suitably account for the relation between the act of narrating, the storyworld, and the extratextual recipient. Continuous inference based on ocularisation is implied in spectatorship and exploited for disparate stylistic effects in fiction, but the point is that “ocularization does not always go hand in hand with focalization” (Jost, 2004: 79). The interaction of specific focalisations, ocularisations and auricularisations is perceivable, for example, when we follow a character whilst being introduced into a house where he or she has never been. If only intradiegetic sound is provided, focalisation tends to be internal (we know what the character knows), but usually in these cases the filmographic monstrator alternates all kinds of ocularisation (the character seen at a distance, over-the-shoulder shot of him or her observing the rooms, a POV shot, the image of a detail, etc.). Yet the same scene would turn to zero focalisation if the spectator already knows something that the character does not (because of the montage), or if extradiegetic music signals impending danger: Jost refers to this latter case as a ‘focalisation spectatorielle’ (Jost, 1987: 28-9) – having a literary equivalent, the ‘focalisation lectorielle’ (127) – which is a stronger case of zero focalisation aimed at creating suspense, to put it simply, extensively used in action, thriller and horror

movies.⁶⁹ An obvious example that includes all of these dynamics of focalisation, ocularisation and auricularisation is Hitchcock's *Vertigo* (1958): in particular, the vertigo effect experienced by the protagonist on the stairs is a primary internal ocularisation embedded in the unfolding of a suspense scene. This example makes it clear that focalisation and ocularisation (as well as auricularisation to a certain extent) are only produced in relation to characters: as Jost remarks, "la focalisation ou l'ocularisation n'ont aucun sens *in abstracto*. La vertu opératoire de ces concepts est de décrire la relation du narrateur aux êtres dont il raconte l'histoire" (25). Thus, Jost directly resumes and integrates the narratological line that I follow. As the mega-narrator is extra- and heterodiegetic, it rules the spectator's cognitive vantage: "cette articulation du voir et du savoir trace clairement la frontière entre les perceptions déléguées aux instances diégétiques et l'activité discursive d'un grande imagier qui oriente notre lecture" (78).

The difference between focalisation and ocularisation is crucial to understanding cinematic fiction too, for it allows us to go beyond old, misleading tenets. As has repeatedly been said, when characters are represented 'from the outside' and no access to their thoughts is given, such that readers are forced into a condition of cognitive disadvantage, this effect would supposedly imitate the normal condition of film spectatorship. Following these assumptions, one might presume that cinematic fiction and 'camera-eye' narratives are one and the same

⁶⁹ I simplify Jost's typology here, therefore see his study for a detailed account of these and other categories describing more complex effects, such as the 'ocularisation modalisée' (32; 123). Also consider that different focalisations seem to pertain to different genres.

and are based on external focalisation, which is an oversimplification.⁷⁰ Certainly, external focalisation is a possibility in novels as well as in films, and it has been exploited in objective (or behaviourist-style) narratives, such as De Roberto's *Processi verbali* (1889), Hemingway's *The Killers* (1927) or Hammett's *The Maltese Falcon* (1930) or, to a lesser extent, in James's *The Awkward Age* (1899). Yet the parallel between external focalisation, film diegesis and camera-eye narrative situation in fiction does not hold. This is because knowing (focalisation) and perceiving (ocularisation/auricularisation) are completely different aspects of narrative communication and reception. In fact, it is important to understand that films are basically *never* entirely in external focalisation; on the contrary, large portions of film diegesis normally unfold in zero focalisation and zero ocularisation, and make use of most other combinations, except in cases of extreme narrative experimentations.⁷¹

On the level of theoretical analysis, the key factor to assess the cinematic quality of written texts seems to be their capacity to transmit ocularisation by following a filmic *rhetoric*. Clearly, this is only another turn of phrase to assert the theoretical impact of the concept of filmographic monstrator. Focalisation is not a determining factor in assessing the cinematic

⁷⁰ One of the limits of the concept of 'camera-eye' stems from its having been created within literary narratology (cf. Spiegel, 1976; Stanzel, 1971, 1984). In this critical context, it has been used as a metaphor which simply refers to the cinematic camera and describes perspective effects or the narrator's impersonality. Thus, the camera-eye technique has too often been evoked without a precise comparison between film narration and verbal narration being made. For a recent contribution that addresses the problems regarding a definition of the camera-eye, see Paolo Giovannetti (2013), who adds: "Sarebbe una pia illusione pensare ai racconti *camera eye* come ad alcunché di coerente e tecnicamente univoco. Uno dei limiti della teoria che si è fatta carico di tali fenomeni è stato proprio il tentativo di ricondurli a un numero limitato di invarianti, pur in presenza di una pluralità di realizzazioni (le più radicali sono quelle – come ricordava Stanzel – attivate da Beckett) che mal si prestano al tranquillizzante calcolo di un vero denominatore comune" (2013: 15).

⁷¹ The awkwardness of a film like Robert Montgomery's *Lady in the Lake* (1947) is almost completely due to a continuous POV shot causing a clumsy effect of persistent friction between the unnatural, unbearable external focalisation and the rather realistic internal primary ocularisation. From the point of view of cognitively-informed studies, the spectator is left in a disadvantageous perceptive position because the protagonist's body perception is dramatically withheld (so that embodied simulation is hardly triggered in the spectators), whilst the narrator's thoughts are not being referred. Such a narrative strategy clashes with the irrational POV shot which would aim to put us in the scene; the cinematic flow of images thereby frustrates the spectator's immersion.

quality of fiction, but only contributes to sustaining certain aesthetic effects. Specific ocularisations, instead, may be crucial clues since they reflect the filmographic monstrator's activity in fiction. Moreover, a certain internal fragmentation that mimics the 'discontinuous continuity' (Cohen 1979) of the vast majority of narrative films is crucial in cinematic fiction; this is determined by the filmographic narrator in a considerable number of montage films, regardless of the different stylistic uses of montage throughout film history, and can be considered a para-cinematic feature in fiction.

To summarise these first observations, in comparing written to filmic narratives in search of broad formal influences by cinema, a privileged area of analysis involves the range of expressive possibilities of the filmographic monstrator and their transcodification into words. Furthermore, a second level of issues arises when considering the other function responsible for information and time manipulation in cinema: the filmographic narrator. In this respect, the notion of camera-eye is inadequate to fully understand the remediation of film form in fiction. In cinematic fiction the interplay of cinema-derived functions (film monstration and film narration as translated in written narratives) engenders a more complex narrating or 'presenting' instance that normally avoids making comments and pretends to act like the film mega-narrator, thereby re-formalising it.

2.2. Temporality in film

A closer look at the articulation of time and narrative rhythm in films and novels will resolve another determining theoretical issue. In fact, "monstration takes place in the present: it is impossible to have shown by showing" (Gaudreault, 2009: 84); but if the filmographic monstrator is forced to stick to the present, to the here and now of the scene, then is the

present tense a necessary condition for a written story to activate a cinematic sensation in the reader's mind, or is it just one possibility?

The narrator controls the amount of narrative information provided to the recipient and the manner in which it is relayed; thus, an interesting parallel between audiovisual and written forms can be made as far as rhythm and narrative segmentation are concerned. If in cinematic novels a para-cinematic agency appears to determine a certain textual organisation, one has to assess the extent to which texts can do what films can do, especially in terms of temporality and immersion. Unfortunately, this point has been rather neglected in many studies in favour of a restricted focus on visual aspects of the cinema-literature connection. The question I aim to answer is whether the configuration of verbal tenses can make a written narrative more cinematically perceivable. Before answering this question, it is necessary to study which temporality is expressed by the film form. I will not search for perfect symmetries or too specific analogies that would lead me into theoretical shallows; on the contrary, I will focus only on general phenomena linked with film form to maintain my freedom to manoeuvre. As already mentioned, this research focuses more on the remediation of dominant features of cinematic language and medium in fiction than the imitation of the style of specific directors by certain writers.

Regarding 'reading' time, film and fiction are not significantly different, because both convey narrative through the present time of our lives and represent a storyworld that is placed at a certain temporal 'distance' from us. Both are 'in the present' simply because their functioning is activated in the present. Clearly, a fundamental difference pertains to the experience of films and books, because film 'reading' is regulated by the forced running time of the movie, whereas lines on a page can be read according to as many individual readings as there are readers. Gianfranco Bettetini (2000) explains film time in terms of *dureté*, in the double meaning of hardness and duration. The film *dureté* entails that, as spectators, we are subjected to the cinematic flow of images quite (but not completely) passively, whereas, as

readers, we actively set our own ‘flow’ of reading, even though page reading cannot actually be too fast or too slow.⁷² Therefore, cinema and written narratives show certain differences in reading time whilst also sharing a primarily important feature: to paraphrase Sartre (2008: 48), both media are ‘peculiar spinning tops’ that exist only when put in movement by humans. Human experientiality is necessary, for it allows to fill the gaps in the narrative (Chatman 1978: 28) and construct the storyworld (Doležel 1998: 203); moreover, it articulates the difference between the real object and the “aesthetic object” (Ingarden, 1967: 304): a closed book or a film reel have, so to speak, no time – they remain mere objects, potential narratives.⁷³

On the other hand, as far as time expressed by film narration (or discourse time) is concerned, in the early years of film theory Balázs conceived the images in silent films as “non conjugables” (2002: 119) and, consequently, as unfolding in a sort of present tense. In the 1960s, Jean Mitry (2000: 194) pointed out the “constant alternation” between actualisation and presentification, between a present “actually happening” and a present “which has already happened”, recalling similar assumptions by Albert Laffay (1964: 54). Hence the similar conclusion in Yuri Lotman (1979: 101-8) and, in the same period, in Umberto Eco:

Ora la differenza tra l’azione filmica e quella narrativa parrebbe la seguente: che il romanzo ci dice “avvenne questo, poi avvenne questo ecc.”, mentre il film ci mette di fronte a una successione di “questo + questo + questo ecc.”, una successione di *rappresentazioni di un presente*, gerarchizzabili solo in fase di montaggio. (1983: 204)

⁷² Occasional slowdowns or accelerations of reading time may apply to both films or written texts and, clearly, spectators and readers nowadays are also allowed to pause, jump back and forth, re-watch or re-read films and books as they please: however, these possibilities are unimportant in the present analysis, which concerns the imitation of intrinsic features of film in fiction.

⁷³ On experientiality see Monika Fludernik (1996) and, recently, Marco Caracciolo (2014). According to Ryan’s ‘principle of minimal departure’, the recipients “project upon these worlds everything [they] know about reality, [making] only the adjustments dictated by the text” (Ryan, 1991: 51), so that fictional worlds are more “constructs of the mind” (19) than semiotic objects. See also Walton’s “principle of charity” (1990: 183).

Similarly, Metz (1974: 108) claimed that the image is “*always actualised*”, and pointed to a fundamental difference between the filmic image that is “always in the present”, and the film as a whole that is “always in the past” (1973: 68). Deleuze pointed out that present time is inextricably intertwined – *hanté*, he says (1985: 54) – with both past and future. Consequently, it is widely accepted nowadays that the filmic image fundamentally mediates between the actual present of its signifier and the distanced time (no matter how long) of what is signified. The filmic image is ostensibly in the historical or a-temporal present, with the flow of images in a constant present progressive, and privileges the singulative event.⁷⁴ As spectators, we watch someone *doing something* or something which *is happening* on the screen and such narration transmits to us a narrative, an intradiegetic time, which *has already happened* or *will happen*, but which in no case is simultaneous to actual experiencing it in the natural time of our lives (as opposed to TV broadcasting, regardless of its signal delay).⁷⁵ Genette (1972: 229; 1980: 217) explains these logical possibilities in terms of ‘subsequent’ temporal positioning (whenever the narrator is placed in a logical future compared to the narrative and recounts *after* the events – in French, ‘*narration ultérieure*’), and ‘anterior’ temporal positioning (whenever the narrator recounts *before* the events actually occur, as in prophecies – ‘*narration antérieure*’).

Film form, however, is characterised by an impression of reality and simultaneity that maintains our immersion in the storyworld. Therefore, the present tense seems inherent in film. In effect, Gaudreault’s mega-monstrator is tied to isochrony: it “analyses” the profilmic

⁷⁴ Singulative events occur once in the story and are expressed once in the narration; repetitive events occur once in the story and are expressed more than once in the narration; iterative events occur more than once in the story, but are expressed once in the narration (Genette, 1972: 145ff., 1980: 113ff.). The filmic image is inherently singulative (Rondolino & Tomasi 2011: 40).

⁷⁵ Branigan (1992: 33) similarly points out that the spectator “encounters at least two major frames of reference in film: the space and time of a *screen* as well as (a sample of) the space and time of a *story world*”. See also Thon (2016: 47), who emphasises that “we may generally distinguish between the *space of the representation* and the *represented space* as well as between the *time of the representation* and the *represented time*”.

“by providing the viewer only what *presents* itself to the camera’s gaze or, in any event, what is accessible, at *present*, to this gaze. Like any good monstrator, it does not have the right to modify time” (2009: 94-5). The issue of the present time is key; it significantly pairs with, even linguistically, Chatman’s emphasis on the ‘presenter’ of film narrative. The presentation/presentification is particularly evident in the early single-shot films that astonished the audience of the time with their immediacy. From this point of view, film form partially shares a quality of verbal discourse. This is obvious as soon as one recalls Gaudreault’s reflection that narrative communication is an act of enunciation, i.e. an act of diegesis.⁷⁶

However, because of the fragmentation of montage and the ‘discontinuous continuity’ that it creates, time relationships in film are to be constructed inferentially and dialectically.⁷⁷ Therefore, unlike staged narratives where, apart from the division into acts, time maintains the same temporal continuity of reality, in montage films the law of temporal progression is more or less disrupted and time inference is the product of narrative convention.⁷⁸ Moreover, unlike written narratives where space is usually not reproduced photographically, filmic space is considerably informative and dense due to the monstrative quality of the medium, and immediately shown and perceived, even if the space only reproduces a part of the storyworld that has to be inferentially completed by the recipient. As David Herman (2002: 264) points out, in fact, “narratives can also be thought of as systems of verbal or visual cues prompting their readers to *spatialize* storyworlds into evolving configurations of participants, objects and places”. Thus, whereas in fiction space is reconstructed mentally and time is expressed, or

⁷⁶ See also Gregory Currie (2010: 6) on this point.

⁷⁷ See also Branigan (1992: 40): “the spectator constructs temporal, spatial, and causal situations by assembling parts two at time”.

⁷⁸ With ‘montage films’ I simply mean films in which montage is used, i.e. films which are not entirely composed of one single long take.

even ‘explained’, through verbal tenses and deictics, time in film has to be construed primarily through represented space. Consequently, time is spatialised or, in other words, a function of space: temporal understanding is the output of spatial inputs. Time comprehension in film is substantially left to the spectators’ inference much more than in written narratives.⁷⁹

I argue that in cinematic fiction such filmic temporality is remediated to varying degrees. But how can we connect and compare the marks of temporality expressed by these two media? There are several *planes* of understanding time that apply to both film and fiction, mirroring Louis Hjelmslev’s semiotic articulations of form, substance, expression and content:⁸⁰

- (1) the natural present where the moving image and the written text interact with the recipient’s mind by means of their physical support, the screen or the page organised in lines (‘substance of expression’);
- (2) the temporal configuration of the narration (‘form of expression’), conveniently conveyed through grammatical marks (especially verbs and adverbs) in written texts, as well as by the coexistence of presentification and temporal distancing enacted in film diegesis;
- (3) the intradiegetic or storyworld temporality (‘form of content’), where all sorts of time manipulation (analepses, prolepses, summary, ellipsis, simultaneity, etc.) are carried out for creative uses; and

⁷⁹ As Boris Eikhenbaum stressed, unlike theatre, time in cinema in fact is not “filled” but “constructed” by the spectator (1987: 42). More generally, following a transmedial perspective such as Thon’s (2016: 48), “locating the situations and events that segments of a given narrative representation represent with the spatiotemporal structure of the storyworld as a whole is a salient part of understanding narrative representations”.

⁸⁰ See Hjelmslev (1961); see David Chandler (2017: 64-7) for a useful introduction to his theory.

- (4) time represented through images or written words and signified in the storyworld ('substance of content') with varying degrees of precision – 'early morning', 'late afternoon', 'three o'clock', 'a day', 'last year', '16th September 1999', etc.

Now, (1) (3) and (4) are well-studied areas, especially by media theory, narratology and semiotics, so I will not add anything to them here; my discussion concerns (2). Regarding the temporal configuration of narration, film form is particularly elusive because the mega-narrator is not free to articulate narration by means of a range of tenses or expressive marks of temporality as literary and oral narrators can do but is especially limited and imprecise (unless of course *voice-over* or captions anticipate or explain what is happening on the screen). This is because presentification (and immersion to a certain extent) is guaranteed by the 'monstrative' quality of film discourse, the inescapable feature of its form of expression. In film form, single 'pieces' of monstration convey the perfect coincidence of story time and discourse time (i.e. the scenic time); simultaneously, the filmographic narrator manipulates such a presentification. However, as presentification seems inescapable in film, one might conclude that the present tense is the effective tense of cinematic writing, also if we consider the fact that screenplays are normally written in the present tense. In fact, film form forcibly draws the storyworld into the present. It *presents* it. Nevertheless, because film as a whole is always detached from natural time, "the illusion of the present tense produced by our viewing of the shot is thus, decidedly, a mere simulacrum of the present" (Gaudreault, 2009: 87-8). As Francis Vanoye (1989) had also understood, the filmic image is not 'in the present', even though it unfolds in the present for the spectator. Filmic narration is expressed through a

disembodied narrator that not only ‘speaks cinema’, as Jost puts it, but speaks in the present and in the past at the same time.⁸¹

This appears more clearly when considering cases of coincidence between running time and fictional time in classics such as Alfred Hitchcock’s *Rope* (1948) and Fred Zinnemann’s *High Noon* (1952). Famously, *Rope* was carefully developed and edited to mask the numerous cuts so as to seemingly unfold in a single long-take; *High Noon* shows a clear montage but maintains the coincidence of running time and fictional time, also increasing the suspense effect through a number of clock images or dialogues about the lack of time. In these cases, monstration is certainly most prominent, but the story is at least minimally distanced by the precise fact of being ‘recounted’, of being a piece of diegesis. Another example of confusion between temporal levels is in Ingmar Bergman’s *Wild Strawberries* (1957). The narrative is not a record of events as they occur, but an account, a retelling of what happened to Professor Borg the day he was awarded an honorary degree. Borg’s voice-over introduces his personality and family in the present tense while we watch him sitting in his studio; however, after the beginning credits, we hear his voice saying “In the early morning of Saturday, the first of June, I *had* a strange and unpleasant dream” (Bergman, 1960: 216; my emphasis). The whole following narrative about Borg’s journey, which constitutes the rest of the film, is a past narrative.

⁸¹ Bettetini first points out that “la *dureté* della diegesi filmica ostacola sensibilmente la percezione di un soggetto parlante e facilita quella di un’organizzazione materiale già in atto: il film tende a essere vissuto come parte del mondo anziché come discorso sul mondo” (2000: 16); then, strikingly, he almost touches on the notion of mega-narrator through his own terminology: “Ora possiamo dire che questo Assente, che ‘ha visto’ le cose *prima* dello spettatore e *per* lo spettatore, che impone quindi allo spettatore la propria dimensione discorsiva e la propria tattica di comunicazione, rivelandola nel testo attraverso indici del suo passaggio, indizi del suo lavoro semiotico, è quell’apparato concettuale definibile come ‘soggetto dell’enunciazione’. Un apparato che, come ogni soggetto enunciativo, può assumere atteggiamenti diversi anche dal punto di vista del tempo, la categoria che qui ci interessa. Un apparato che può svolgere, a esempio, le funzioni del narratore e quelle del commentatore” (98).

I therefore suggest a parallel between the temporality expressed in fiction through a range of verbal forms and the temporality expressed in film form through the ‘monstrative’ chain of moving images; but I also argue that: 1) the present tense is not a sufficient category to determine cinematic writing; and 2) the cinematic mode in fiction allows (or can be triggered by) the use of different tenses.

In effect, when novels and short stories are scrutinised for traces of film influence, it seems that the present tense is only one possibility and may express a cinematisation of the text when a set of conditions of para-cinematic enunciation are satisfied (e.g. a certain interaction of focalisation and ocularisation). This is why screenplays – which are working texts – are in the present. The present tense can facilitate a cinematic mental association. However, evidence will show that past tenses, on the other hand, do not preclude a para-cinematic style. In the following chapters, I will discuss some examples of fiction narrated in a variety of tense combinations.

2.3. The narrative ‘putting-into-relief’ in film and fiction

The narrative strategies deployed in fiction can be dealt with in terms of background and foreground style, building on past insights from scholars such as Erich Auerbach (1975).⁸² In particular, the alternation between background and foreground style has also been linked to tenses and framed in terms of ‘narrative relief’ by Harald Weinrich. Instead of considering tenses separately as non-equivocal sources of narrative temporality, Weinrich examines their

⁸² In the first essay of *Mimesis*, Auerbach distinguished between foreground style (in Homer) and background style (in the Bible): “Più sopra ho definito lo stile omerico, stile di primo piano, perché Omero, nonostante i balzi avanti e indietro, tuttavia, di ciò che di volta in volta è raccontato fa pura cosa presente, e la lascia operare senza prospettiva” (Auerbach, 1975: 13).

mutual cooperation and logical interaction, because tenses are textual marks that also trigger narrative positioning, emphasis and rhythm.⁸³ His analysis in *Tempus* (1978),⁸⁴ the foundational study of textual linguistics, has nothing to do with cinematic novels specifically; however, it proves instrumental in assessing the cinematic mode in fiction. I introduce it here as a heuristic device.

Weinrich first makes clear that his analytical approach focuses on the text as a whole. He denies the centrality of the sentence against other morphological elements of verbal discourse. His approach first undermines a possible analogy which, at times, is used to assess the cinematic quality of texts: I refer to the analogy between the sentence and the single filmic shot, which seems rather detrimental.⁸⁵ Indeed, there is no criterion to support the claim that one sentence equals one shot. Even if full stops can be regarded as strong textual marks regulating discursive rhythm, there is no logical necessity in saying that full stops indicate changes in the ‘framing’ of scenes (not to mention when the textual passages at hand do not convey an impression of the scenic at all). Consider the following excerpt:

Il riflesso sul mare si forma quando il sole s’abbassa: dall’orizzonte una macchia abbagliante si spinge fino alla costa, fatta di tanti luccichii che ondeggianno; tra luccichio e luccichio, l’azzurro opaco del mare incupisce la sua rete. Le barche bianche contolute si fanno nere, perdono consistenza ed estensione, come consumate da quella picchiettatura risplendente.

⁸³ “Il tempo verbale è assolutamente indipendente dall’aspetto durativo o puntuale del processo e dipende *esclusivamente* dal valore posizionale che la tecnica narrativa conferisce alla frase nell’insieme del racconto” (Weinrich, 1978: 148-9).

⁸⁴ Weinrich’s study has never been translated into English. Therefore, the English translation of the original categories proposed by Weinrich in German are mediated here by the Italian (and French) translation (Weinrich 1978), from which I quote. A short presentation of Weinrich’s categories in English can be found in his article *Tense and Time* (Weinrich 1970).

⁸⁵ An example is in Seed (2012: 76), who comments on Hemingway’s style in these terms: “the sentences – each one a ‘shot’ – give a staccato montage”. Seed’s book, however, proves insightful and valuable for a multitude of reasons.

This excerpt from Calvino's *Palomar* (1992: 883) is composed by two sentences, but how many shots can be observed? It is not clear why the full stop should be more determining in this respect than commas, semicolons or colons (particularly colons: one may suppose that a colon entails a pause or a transition so that the following elements seem to be 'taken' at a closer distance). This is impossible to ascertain, and speculation is rather futile as well. And what about ocularisation? Actually, Jost (1987: 25-6) seems to share Weinrich's view in championing an approach to the narrative as a whole, because "comme le récit, l'ocularisation ne prend son sens qu'avec la succession de photos". A methodology that focuses on the single sentence to draw conclusions about the literary translation of filmic shots is dangerous if not profoundly wrong. Moreover, the sentence seems to be the very articulation of discourse that should not initially be compared with the filmic shot. As filmic shots represent states or actions of beings, a provisional parallel may be made with noun phrases and predicates, if anything. As Metz (1974: 65) pointed out, the filmic image, in turn, can be considered equivalent to one or more sentences, and a sequence is a complex segment of the film discourse. However, the most productive comparison is foremost the 'text', which clearly collects the interplay of a number of features, be it written or audiovisual. In this respect, the tense configuration stands out for my purposes.

In Weinrich's terms, recurring textual signs are 'obstinate signs' (1978: 15) and verb tenses are certainly of this kind. Verbs follow the categories of 'commentative' tenses and 'narrative' tenses (23), and in most texts are found in combinations and transitions, although some of them gain a particular relevance. In Italian, the main commentative tenses used in non-fictional discourse and non-narrative communication are the *presente* and *passato prossimo*; the main narrative tenses are the *passato remoto* and *imperfetto*, which are the authentic tenses of narration and are absolutely dominant in most written fiction. A similar subdivision holds true

in relation to the specific tenses used in French and English.⁸⁶ The use and interaction of commentative and narrative forms reflects what Weinrich calls the ‘commentary world’ and ‘narrated world’ (37). By comparing literary texts (e.g., Maupassant, Pirandello, Hemingway and others) a fundamental subdivision emerges: that of ‘foreground’ tenses (in Italian: *presente*, commentative; *passato remoto*, narrative) and ‘background’ tenses (*passato prossimo*, commentative; and *imperfetto*, narrative).⁸⁷

Let us keep our focus on the ‘narrated world’ for the moment, where stories are normally told in the past. Weinrich (1978: 125 *et passim*) deduces the category of ‘narrative relief’ or ‘putting-into-relief’ from narrative texts. Historically, the putting-into-relief accounts for the need of writers to create a background against which to emphasise the main events, the *faits divers* which really deserve to be told (in short, those that end up in a summary). Narratives can be written with a strong penchant for background tenses, as in the great realistic novels of the nineteenth century, when authors aimed at giving a wide sociological or psychological picture through their narratives, and the background tenses dominate; or they can be narrated

⁸⁶ In Weinrich’s complete classification, Italian tenses follow this subdivision: commentative tenses – *presente*, *passato prossimo*, *futuro*, *futuro anteriore*; narrative tenses – *trapassato prossimo*, *trapassato remoto*, *imperfetto*, *passato remoto*, *condizionale presente*, *condizionale passato* (1978: 79). Similar classifications apply to the five languages analysed by Weinrich, with significant differences regarding English: in English, in short, all tenses formed in combination with the present participle have the function of expressing the narrative or commentative background; the simple past expresses the narrative foreground; the present perfect is fundamentally a commentative tense (cf. Weinrich, 1978: 94-105, 168-9).

⁸⁷ It must be specified that the concept of ‘foregrounding’ does not have the same meaning as in literary stylistics, although it shows a striking correlation. See some key insights on foregrounding in stylistics: “Capable of working at any level of language, foregrounding typically involves a stylistic distortion of some sort, either through an aspect of the text which deviates from a linguistic norm or, alternatively, where an aspect of the text is brought to the fore through repetition or parallelism” (Simpson, 2004: 5); see also: “Foregrounding refers to a form of textual patterning which is motivated specifically for literary-aesthetic purposes” (50). Christiana Gregoriou (2014) highlights the concepts of ‘deviation’ and ‘parallelism’. See also the concept of ‘estrangement’ in Shklovsky (1965) and, more recently, Joanna Gavins (2014) on ‘defamiliarisation’. See also Geoffrey Leech (2014: 30): “The norms of the language are in this dimension of analysis regarded as ‘background’, against which features which are prominent because of their abnormality are placed in focus”. David Miall (2006: 145) has recently synthesised his three-decade-long work and discussed the ‘defamiliarization-recontextualization cycle’: “the concept or experience that was defamiliarized at the moment of foregrounding become recontextualized” after a certain amount of time during reading.

through a more insistent use of the foreground tense to give more immediacy (for example, Voltaire's *Candide* is a typical example of a French story where the *passé simple* stands out). The narrative relief sufficiently explains the tense articulation and narrative strategies in most cases. However, Weinrich does not explore those narratives that unfold through 'commentative' tenses, because they have been a minor group in the history of literature. Yet, present-tense narratives have been written since the Middle Ages and have grown in popularity during the twentieth and twenty-first century, while an increasing number of narratives have been written in commentative tenses in contemporary literature: the case of Albert Camus's *L'Étranger* (1942), which is conducted in the *passé composé*, is exemplary. As these texts normally satisfy all requirements of complex narratives, it is rather problematic to relegate them to the boundaries of the 'commentary world' simply because the narration is led through commentative tenses: the storyworld is not merely commented but narrated by commentative tenses. Moreover, their tense configuration often mirrors the same articulation (background / foreground) also observable in the 'narrated world'.⁸⁸ This change of paradigm and narrative technique grew in popularity during the 20th century. Many novels challenge Weinrich's classification. The boundary between the commentary world and narrated world is by no means insurmountable in fiction.

An attempt at using Weinrich's observations to describe the narrative relief in films was made in the 1970s by Bettetini (2000). However, some of his conclusions were arguable: on the one hand, he pointed out that some films, which may well pertain to different genres and different styles, aim at eliminating the narrative relief. Films such as Nanni Moretti's *Ecce Bombo* (1978) or classics such as Carl T. Dreyer's *La Passion de Jeanne D'Arc* (1928) or Robert

⁸⁸ In Weinrich's (1978: 236) there is no real subdivision in background and foreground in the commentative tenses. The Italian *passato prossimo*, as well as the French *passé composé*, the German *Perfekt*, the English *present perfect* and the Spanish *pasado compuesto*, are rather retrospective tenses in the group of the commentative tenses.

Bresson's *Un condanné à mort s'est échappé* (1956) would be examples of minimal narrative relief; and in opposition to these examples, Hollywood style would be characterised by a tendency toward creating an evident narrative relief (Bettetini, 2000: 112). Moreover, he grounded his interpretation in a direct translation of Weinrich's spatial metaphor (the relief) into the cinematic practice and jargon:

Il rapporto di spazializzazione metaforica connesso alla nozione di 'rilievo' si realizza, normalmente, negli audiovisivi, concretizzandosi in una vera differenziazione spaziale [...]. Lo sfondo è spazialmente, geometricamente, sfondo; il primo piano è primo piano. (Bettetini, 2000: 113)

This assumption is problematic: if it is true that in films "il rapporto tra primo piano e sfondo della narrazione è spesso risolto dalla tecnica di composizione e di rapporto tra i diversi piani" (112), this relationship cannot be interpreted too narrowly. Important narrative events can also be rendered through long shots: this is the case with all transitions to long shots of explosions in most action movies, or the case of the camera distancing itself in an execution scene. The link with spatialisation has to be bracketed, and Weinrich's metaphor must be interpreted as such. Narrative foreground is separate from photographic foreground and visual perspective. The narrative relief has to do with the narrative as a whole and describes its rhythm.

A comparative approach based on narrative relief is useful if taken more radically: while in fiction the narrative foreground designates relevant events standing out from a background of narrative summaries, digressions and comments, in film, on the other hand, most events gain relevance due to the monstration quality of the medium, and the entire narrative ultimately ends up being *pushed towards the narrative foreground*. This is the illusionistic and immersive power of cinema. Whether essential or irrelevant to the plot, narrative events seem to be shown substantially on the same level: the narrative relief, which describes the range between the background and foreground, is never truly eliminated; rather, it tends to be *flattened*, as it

were.⁸⁹ The flattened narrative relief of film form matches and interacts with different styles, allowing for disparate outcomes. Compare the opening sequence of Sergio Leone's *Once Upon a Time in the West* (1968) with Eisenstein's famous 'Odessa Steps' sequence in *Battleship Potemkin* (1925). In the first, we see three men who are evidently waiting for a train. Their waiting is focused through marginal actions (catching a fly, drops of water gathering on a hat, cracking knuckles), which are completely irrelevant to the plot (but are extremely important in conveying a suspended atmosphere). Certainly, intense close-ups also overinvest actions here in order to trigger the audience's suspense (focalisation is straightforwardly external). This beginning takes an enormous span of seven minutes to unfold. The mixture of heat, boredom, tension and a disquieting atmosphere clearly emerges and is pushed towards the narrative foreground. As a happy coincidence, Eisenstein's sequence, where instead a key event is recounted (again with close-ups, highly fragmented montage, but this is not entirely relevant now) takes the same amount of time. Focalisation is internal here (the crowd is focalised, spectators understand what the crowd understands), and Eisenstein's style is certainly quite different from Leone's. However, in relation to the narrative relief expressed by the film as a medium, the flattening or levelling towards the foreground is significant in both.

Weinrich, of course, did not think of film form when he wrote that "nel primo piano del racconto sta quello che succede, ciò che si muove trasformandosi" (1978: 197); still, this definition, which he gives almost in passing and in reference to written texts, strikingly

⁸⁹ This flattening of the narrative relief therefore lies on the temporal level and constitutes an evolution and a complementary argument in relation to Spiegel's idea of 'depthlessness' in much cinematised narrative. As already mentioned, Speigel's analysis is jeopardised by his referring to the 'camera' instead of the film form, thereby emphasising all those aspects of film and cinematised narrative that have to do with visibility, photographic quality, and so on, to the detriment of the importance of the temporality triggered by the medium and by specific techniques. However, Spiegel, like Balázs and Cohen, emphasises that "in the film image, then, regardless of the object's position in relation to the character, both object and character as formal entities on the same plane will tend to impress themselves with an equality of insistence on the consciousness of the viewer" (Spiegel, 1976: 135).

illuminates the ontological status of film form.⁹⁰ Films can obviously be different in narrative articulation, rhythm, narrative relief, and belong to different *regimi narrativi*.⁹¹ However, the generalised flattening of the narrative relief in film form mirrors its unyielding presentation/presentification, its monstration. In short, it reflects its impossibility not to show something, which for the very fact of being put-in-frame is automatically put into the narrative foreground to a certain extent. Digressive, irrelevant, peripheral elements in film automatically gain an excess of meaning-making (so evident in avant-garde and experimental cinema or, say, in Antonioni); alternatively, these elements come to be reduced and re-absorbed within what is linear, relevant, and central (the typical traits of Hollywood's paradigm). In filmic narratives, therefore, there is very little diegetic background, no matter which genre a certain film belongs to and how much action it contains; almost everything tends to be narratively relevant (partially because almost everything has a production cost). Bettetini's examples paradoxically strengthen this perspective. In very weak or simple narratives, negligible events gain a surplus of interest because they become catalysts of unprecedented attention; on the contrary, in Hollywood style the predominance of action and

⁹⁰ In fact, for Panofsky (1959: 15-6) too, the “primordial basis of the enjoyment of moving pictures was not an objective interest in a specific subject matter, much less an aesthetic interest in the formal presentation of subject matter, but the sheer delight in the fact that things seemed to move, no matter what things they were”.

⁹¹ Francesco Casetti and Federico Di Chio (1990) describe four types: *regime narrativo forte*, *regime narrativo debole*, *regime di anti-narrazione*, *regime metanarrativo*.

the centrality of the story cannot help but reflect the narrative foregrounding, regardless of the specificity of singular shots (i.e. the ocularisation).⁹²

To make use of a different metaphor, the film flux works as a compressor of narrativity the same way as a compression effect device works on sound waves (compressors are very common devices used to play and record music, or record and transmit radio and TV signals). A sound compressor limits the high and low peaks of sound intensity within a pre-selected range. Audio signals that are too low or too high are raised to the minimum or limited to the maximum level that is useful to convey a suitable, audible and ‘clean’ sound. Similarly, in films, narrative is ‘compressed’ and substantially pushed toward the narrative foreground; therefore, it cannot drop below a certain level by virtue of the monstrative and presentifying qualities of the medium. It goes without saying that the flattening of the narrative relief has nothing to do with carelessness, or stylistic ‘flatness’, or a lack of rhythm in the film as a whole but is fine-tuned to satisfy (or challenge) the requirements of genres. In a comparative perspective with fiction, what matters is that, regardless of how the narrative relief is actually articulated in specific films, the range of such ‘relief’ in film would always prove as consistently reduced, especially when drawing a comparison with the great novelistic tradition until the first decades of the twentieth century.

⁹² As a general principle, in film the more cuts we have, the more fragmented scenic time is. The logic of montage links together the discontinuous images projected on the screen and creates a continuity that transcends the ellipses, creating simultaneity and consequentiality. Some filmmakers have challenged this convention and sought different effects: see the obvious examples of Godard’s extenuating long-takes in *Weekend* (1967), or the repetitive movements in the famous ballet *à trois* in his *Bande à part* (1964), or even those of the camera, again in *Weekend* (a double 360° pan, very slowly). However, *temps morts* in cinema do not escape action, nor does the action of passing time. Antonioni’s finale in *L’eclisse* (1962) is paradigmatic in this sense, since in film form “the non-appearance of a character where you would normally expect one to appear is also a form of development, much as a non-act (idly standing by as someone is drowning) is also a form of action” (Verstraten 2009: 18). Nevertheless, the fragmentation of narrative events into shots, according to the very elemental principles deriving from classic Hollywood editing, has been much more commonly used, and clear actions, very ‘active’ characters or natural agents have informed the vast majority of film production. Such an intensive suggestion has influenced fiction.

The flattening of the narrative relief in cinema has to do with its intrinsic narrativity, its “narrative pressure” (Chatman, 1980: 126). As Gaudreault puts it, recalling Metz (1974: 45): “We would thus be justified in considering a film’s message as being assailed on all sides by narrativity, and the cinema as an exemplary narrative art. [...] The filmic *énoncé* can only abstain from narrativity with great difficulty and in exceptional cases if it is not to deny its very nature” (Gaudreault, 2009: 31-2). In cinema, the articulation of a basically fragmented temporality in the forced continuity of the running time produces a generalised flattening of narrative foreground and background. Given the two-fold temporality expressed by film, where past and present coalesce into the specificity of the film’s moving image, the cinematic mode in literature, in turn, must include a mirroring of this temporality and the narrative relief that it derives from. Therefore, a strong condition for fiction to gain an effect of ‘filmic’ is the putting-into-the-foreground of the narrative, by means of a suitable articulation of the verbal tenses. A written narrative text deriving the same structural feature is potentially cinematic, regardless of the imitation of specific cinematic techniques. Conversely, a marked narrative relief frustrates the imitation of cinematic techniques in fiction and tends to limit the cinematic dimension of texts. Accordingly, both internally-focalised present-tense narratives (e.g. Robbe-Grillet’s *La jalouse*) and externally-focalised past-tense narratives (e.g. Hammett’s *The Maltese falcon*) may result in cinematic narratives when foreground tenses largely prevail; fictional narratives that alternate between commentative and narrative tenses, first-person and third-person narration (e.g. Vittorini’s *Uomini e no*) may express a flattening of the narrative relief and cinematisation under certain circumstances, especially when a clear visual rhetoric or the use of montage also emerges; finally, third-person narratives that largely unfold in background or retrospective tenses tend to lose a fundamental feature of the cinematic mode, despite the manifest imitation of some cinematic techniques (e.g. Tabucchi’s *Piazza d’Italia*). These examples evidently do not describe the whole range of possibilities given by the

combination of narrating voice, focalisation and tense, but constitute a significant sample.

They will be explored in Part II and III.

3. THE CINEMATIC MODE

3.1. Family resemblances

Genre theory stems from a huge philosophical and rhetoric tradition, and benefits from an extensive bibliography. A detailed account of the main critical viewpoints throughout the centuries would be redundant here and worth a separate study. Nevertheless, I will lay out a brief historical introduction that illuminates which of the old perspectives on genre have passed into contemporary theories that are useful for a definition of the cinematic mode.

The classic subdivision of genres rooted in Plato's *Republic* and Aristotle's *Poetics* was so well established and codified as to constitute an inescapable reference point for centuries.⁹³ At the beginning of the nineteenth century, romantic and idealist writers and thinkers challenged and reshaped that division following two divergent perspectives: on the one hand, that of individual genius;⁹⁴ on the other, that of historicism, following Georg W.F. Hegel's aesthetics.⁹⁵ Subsequently, in the age of Positivism, the idealist dynamic of thesis, antithesis and synthesis seemed paralleled in the extraordinary achievements of science. French theorist

⁹³ See Genette's discussion of the topic in *Introduction à l'architexte* (Genette, 2004: 39-51); see also John Frow (2015: 55-78).

⁹⁴ Friedrich von Schlegel outlined the role of individual genius, expressing his wish that the poet's free will be subjected to no law, and in 'Athenaeum Fragment 116' he described romantic literature in terms of *poiesis* (Pillai, 2004: 692). Such idea would be developed in Friedrich Schelling's *Philosophy of Art* in 1802 (Schelling 1989) and significantly taken on by Victor Hugo in his Preface to *Cromwell* in 1827, and afterward by the rest of Western Europe (cf. Frey, 1999: 76-7).

⁹⁵ In Hegel's philosophy, historicism is the means and the aim of philosophy itself, and aesthetics takes a strong teleological implication. Therefore, genres are seen as being shaped throughout human history in these terms: first, epic poetry, in which "the childlike consciousness of a people is expressed for the first time in poetic form"; then, lyric poetry, when "the mind develops into a likewise independent world of subjective vision, reflection and feeling" (Hegel, 1975: 1045-6); finally, dramatic poetry, which is "the most perfect totality of content and form" and "must be regarded as the highest stage of poetry and of art generally", given that it "unites the objectivity of epic with the subjective character of lyric" and "is the product of a completely developed and organised national life" (Hegel, 1975: 1158).

Ferdinand Brunetière applied Darwinian principles to literature.⁹⁶ A complete rejection of all previous theories is found in Benedetto Croce (1912, 1919, 1990), who launched the debate in the twentieth century making *tabula rasa* of the articulation of genres.⁹⁷ Croce acknowledged similarities amongst works of art, but deprived them of any theoretical relevance; he simply pointed out that "le somiglianze [...] consistono semplicemente in ciò che si chiama aria di famiglia, derivante dalle condizioni storiche in cui nascono le varie opere, o dalle parentele d'anima tra gli artisti" (Croce, 1912: 85-6). Croce believed that genres are heuristic tools that must be abandoned immediately to free the critic's spirit and the work of art itself from meaningless aesthetic cages. Similar assumptions can be found in philosopher Giovanni Gentile (1950) in the same years, or in Maurice Blanchot's claim in 1959: "Only the book matters, as it stands, far from genres, apart from the labels" (cf. Todorov, 1973: 8).

Some decades after Croce's claims, Ludwig Wittgenstein put forth the idea that "“games” form a family" and that "family resemblances" can be observed.⁹⁸ Croce's idea of 'family likeness' (or 'family aura') is substantially subverted: genre is something to be understood, as a

⁹⁶ In 1890, he claimed that features of literary forms were evolving and combining as if they were replicating animal evolution: the laws of struggle for existence, survival of the fittest, and natural selection were applied to aesthetics. See the *Leçon d'ouverture* of his *L'Évolution des genres dans l'histoire de la littérature* (Brunetière 1914).

⁹⁷ In Croce's thought "l'arte è perfettamente definita [...] come intuizione" (Croce, 1990: 47). He used some words such as 'intuizione', 'visione', 'contemplazione', 'immaginazione', 'fantasia', 'figurazione', etc., as basically equivalent. Particularly relevant is the term 'poesia' [lyrics], since what gives coherence and unity to intuition is intense feeling: "ogni vera creazione d'arte è pura intuizione solo a patto di essere pura lirica" (151). Hence the equivalence of 'intuizione' and 'espressione' (65), that is to say, of aesthetics and philosophy of language. Therefore, Croce also reacted to what he judged as confusion and superficialities in the classical and romantic doctrines that attempted to systematise art. He refused the alleged normativity of genre categories, and claimed that defining generic differences among works of art is a pointless operation in aesthetic terms, because "epica e lirica, o dramma e lirica, sono scolastiche divisioni dell'indivisibile" (45), and 'l'intuizione artistica è [...] sempre intuizione lirica" (47).

⁹⁸ "Consider for example the proceedings that we call 'games'. I mean board-games, card-games, ball-games, Olympic games, and so on. [...] If you look at them you will not see some thing that is common to *all*, but similarities, relationships [...] a complicated network of similarities overlapping and criss-crossing: sometimes overall similarities, sometimes similarities of detail. I can think of no better expression to characterize these similarities than 'family resemblances' [...] – And I shall say: 'games' form a family" (Wittgenstein, 1953: 66-7).

rule that has to be understood to play a game. Wittgenstein's suggestion would be taken on by some of the major contributors to genre theory afterwards, while Croce's perspective would be firmly challenged, especially with the dissemination of Edmund Husserl's phenomenology from the 1930s.

In the 1940s and 1950s, more objective critical approaches found a fertile ground within the American New Criticism, as well as in critics, such as René Wellek, Austin Warren, or Roman Jakobson who had closer links with the Prague linguistic circle. Wellek and Warren (1963: 226) claimed that genre is an “institution” and “a principle of order”, and recommended a fundamentally descriptive approach, while also pointing out that literary forms and models are in constant transformation.⁹⁹ Such a trajectory in criticism towards a ‘scientific’ method can be observed across theories that are irreconcilable in many respects. However, Frye warned that “the purpose of criticism by genres is not so much to classify as to clarify such traditions and affinities, thereby bringing out a large number of literary relationships that would not be noticed as long as there were no context established for them” (1973: 247-8). And yet, jumping to Tzvetan Todorov’s criticism (cf. 1973: 13), there is blatant Structuralist perspective in his positing historical and theoretical genres; a position on theoretical genres that he then partly withdrew (cf. Todorov, 1976) when he described the link between the origin and the unfolding of genres in terms of ‘speech act’ and ‘discourse’, thereby testifying to the strong influence brought by Bakhtin’s studies in the meantime.

This brings us to a parallel route. Indeed, the works of Russian Formalists from the 1910s to the 1930s and Bakhtin’s critique of their methods had not been well known to Western

⁹⁹ “Do genres remain fixed? Presumably not. With the addition of new works, our categories shift” (Wellek and Warren, 1963: 227).

culture until the mid 1960s.¹⁰⁰ Shklovsky (1991: 20) claimed that “the form of a work of art is determined by its relationship with other pre-existing forms” and that “*the new form makes its appearance not in order to express a new content, but rather, to replace an old form that has already outlived its artistic usefulness*”. Following a similar logic, Tynyanov too (2003) refused static definitions of genre in favour of a dynamic one, whose principles are fight and change, and Tomashevsky (2012: 95) pointed out that “thus devices are born, grow old, and die”, being renovated as they become automatic. Such perspectives clearly betray their inherent determinism, but are particularly telling for how the debate in the first decades of the twentieth century was moving toward a definition of generic changes that was more strictly and convincingly linked to the literary field.

Bakhtin vigorously challenged the abstract objectivism of most of these principles, because their largely linguistic theoretical framework can only describe superficial and non-thematic procedures, whilst “theme always transcends language” (Bakhtin and Medvedev, 1985: 132). Moreover, in order to assign a genre, it is necessary to go beyond such an atomist perspective of structural devices and motifs that are treated as ready-made elements in perennial recombination. In Bakhtin’s insight, genre should be linked to the entire, contextual *utterance* expressed by the work – which *is* the work. Therefore, a word, a sentence, or a whole text are seen as two-sided ‘speech acts’ (cf. Bakhtin, 1986). Genre, or speech genre, has a “two-fold orientation” and connections with “real space and real time” because it “presupposes a particular audience, this or that type of reaction, and one or another relationship between the

¹⁰⁰ A collection of essays of the Russian formalists was first translated and edited in France by Tzvetan Todorov (1965). According to the principles of Russian Formalism, literature ‘estranges’ its material, i.e., it renders ordinary reality perceivable under new perspectives, and therefore recognisable again, for it brings a given object into view: it makes “a stone feel stony”, in Shklovsky’s famous formula (1991: 6). Thus, the formalists claimed that the true object of the science of literature is the ‘literariness’ of the literary work, and that the analysis of motifs and genres should constitute a crucial critical exercise. Bakhtin’s thought and criticism of the formalist methods was introduced in the critical debate in France and to Western culture through Julia Kristeva’s notion of intertextuality (cf. Kristeva, 1980).

audience and the author” (Bakhtin and Medvedev, 1985: 130-1). Words have a pragmatic function, and utterances are never neutral. Hence, genres are ‘dialogic’, relational: they are rooted in previous utterances and co-determined by the addressee’s expectations. They are oriented ‘toward finalization’. Therefore, genre can be defined as a form of thinking, as a “form-shaping ideology” (Morson and Emerson 1990) that reveals its historical traits. Furthermore, “each genre possesses definite principles of selection, definite forms of seeing and conceptualizing reality, and a definite scope and breath of penetration” (Bakhtin and Medvedev, 1985: 131). Genre signals, above all, the thematic unity of the work that interacts with the historical context that receives it. Since readers and the social context are fundamental factors contributing to the shaping of genres, to the encoding of utterances, each utterance (i.e., each work) reveals its own historical dimension. Therefore, “a genuine poetics of genre can only be a sociology of genre” (Bakhtin and Medvedev, 1985: 135).

The importance of understanding genre has also been affirmed outside the borders of aesthetic and art-related theories. From semiotic and psycho-linguistic perspectives, genres are, broadly speaking, always “mediating frameworks between texts, makers and interpreters” (Chandler, 1997: 8). A number of scholars in the last forty years have established how textual interpretation, in its wider meaning, including audio and visual media, relies on the proper consideration of generic features (going so far as to produce a reading against the conventions of genre), and that children are able to distinguish genres very early on (Buckingham 1993). In approaching texts, any reader, viewer, or listener activates a set of generic skills that enable them to make sense and have a deeper enjoyment of the contents. This also triggers renewed generic articulations in their mind. Thus, genres are textual schemata. Indeed, in literature, as well as in other arts and media, genres can be seen as vehicles of a “set of expectations” (Neale, 1980: 51) that can also be betrayed, or “‘contracts’ to be negotiated between the text and the reader” (Livingstone, 1994: 252-3). The recognition of a genre can spark cognitive pleasure (Abercrombie, 1996: 43; Knight, 1994), because of the two-fold dynamics of

repetition and variation that come to be established in the aesthetic object at hand. Ultimately, genre frames, constrains and orients our comprehension as long as the conventions of genre are learned. Therefore, genres generate, and are generated by, their recipients, following a Bakhtinian perspective.¹⁰¹

In regard to cinematic fiction, it goes without saying that works displaying a certain ‘family resemblance’ because of specific formal traits, must be assessed against such a fundamental theoretical background. On the one hand, the notion of the ‘cinematic’ seems to retain its historic validity only if associated with the corresponding rise and evolution of cinema throughout the twentieth century. Since, in the context of the ‘film age’ (Hauser 1999b), both writers and readers have evolved into a mass of readers-viewers, the contribution of cinematic features in fiction and their forming of new generic traits cannot be separated from the contextual driving force of the cinema industry and the gradual change in the audience. This was already implied in Bakhtin’s theorisation of the ‘speech acts’. Only the process has become more genuinely transmedial than intertextual and grounded in communication in general. One could say that a new medial and, therefore, a new generic trait has found its recipient.

However, the retrospective recognition of the cinematic trait – which is a learned convention – raises a problem with historicising cinematic fiction. Readers who have learned a new way of visualising stories, thanks in part to the cinema, are led to apply the same mental schemata to works preceding the film age. It is possible that contemporary readers claim to feel that Homer’s epic poems or Dickens’s novels are ‘cinematic’. This does not constitute an

¹⁰¹ This is especially true in mass culture, in television and film products that are created to satisfy specific audiences and that are not neutral in the construction of identity, sexuality and ideology (cf. Fiske, 1987: 114; Neale, 1980: 56-62), as they trigger differences and preferences (e.g., ‘masculine’ and ‘feminine’ genres). This happens because “different genres are concerned to establishing different world views” (Livingstone, 1990: 155), and create a framework that can, in turn, be challenged by the recipient.

issue as long as the search for the ‘filmic’ does not clash with the non-cinematic generic structures of the works, thus triggering frustration. How many contemporary readers are frustrated with reading literary classics in part due to their wordiness, thereby turning to films because of their immediacy and brevity to satisfy their need for culture, stories, and emotions?

Finally, on the level of theoretical analysis and textual criticism, the act of attributing cinematic traits also concerns the validity of interpretation and involves the authorial will. If genres are utterances and involve negotiation and cooperation (cf. Eco, 1979) – in short, a ‘contract’ – they cannot be separated from one of the two poles of communication, namely the source of the textual configuration and meaning, the author.

3.2. Cinematic fiction and narrative contract

In the previous sections I have shed light on the fact that the discussion on cinematic fiction is better posed in terms of *discours*. Therefore, to get to a plausible assessment of the filmic in fiction, it is necessary to compare the ‘intra-textual’ functions that convey the narrative in film and fiction and assess the degree of imitation of film in fiction on that level. On the other hand, be it reader or spectator, the narrative’s recipient participates in the entire dynamic. Readers and spectators play an important part because they co-operate in the process of communication, and validate it.

In introducing her analysis on the foundation of the age of novel in Italy, Giovanna Rosa (2008) has recently re-proposed the useful concept of *patto narrativo* to describe the convention

of narrative transmission.¹⁰² The narrative ‘pact’, or ‘contract’, is often displayed in the strategic area of the beginning of the text. In conceiving and publishing stories, authors commit to satisfying the readers’ expectations and honour the ‘contract’ they put forth at the beginning by upholding that set of features throughout the narrative. However, despite being key to interpretation, the textual area of the beginning and the concept of beginning itself have “long been neglected or misunderstood” (Richardson, 2008: 1).¹⁰³ The idea of a pact, a contract, or an agreement between the two extra-textual figures of literary communication, the implied author and the implied reader, is grounded in the past. Reflections about the role of the reader in the modern age hark back to an illustrious tradition of writers and critics, from Samuel T. Coleridge’s ‘willing suspension of disbelief’ to Charles Baudelaire’s ‘hypocrite lecteur’, and have sparked important studies (e.g. Auerbach, 1993; Booth, 1961; Curtius, 2013; Eco, 1979; Goody, 1987; Iser, 1978; Jauss, 1982; Lejeune, 1986; Sartre, 2008; Watt, 2000). These studies have notoriously paved the way for an important line of reader-oriented insights which have also recently benefited from cognitively-informed research (e.g. Miall, 2006). The narrow scope of this study does not allow me to dwell on these issues; I shall instead focus on the theoretical usefulness of the concept of narrative contract in relation to cinematic fiction, since in the modern literary system the dialectic of negotiation between authors and readers implies a way of reading as well as a type of writing for every genre (cf. Lejeune, 1986: 49).

As readers, we do not enter storyworlds neutrally. We accept a set of conditions that are enacted by texts. Texts carry and exhibit the traces of the historical circumstances of production and consumption in which they are conceived. In the epoch of early modern

¹⁰² For a perspective on audiovisual medium, note that Michel Chion (1994) described the relationship between the cinema-goer and the film in terms of “audiovisual contract”.

¹⁰³ An important study on the topic, however, is Edward W. Said’s *Beginnings* (1975).

novels, Henry Fielding in *Tom Jones* (1749) described this fictional contract as a menu where the author gives his customers some information about the food and the servings, also pointing out that they are in turn free to find different or better delicacies in another restaurant (cf. Fielding, 2008: 29-30). Eighteenth and nineteenth-century novels abound with these ‘addresses to the reader’. Thus, the narrative threshold takes on multiple functionalities:

Sulla soglia del racconto, il narratore porge le istruzioni per l’uso, rende esplicito il codice formalizzatore, delinea la fisionomia del lettore elettivo, ne orienta l’attenzione fruitiva, si confronta con i modelli e i canoni della tradizione, chiarisce i suoi intenti. (Rosa 2008: 11)

The new technology of printing and the bourgeois revolution brought about a new reading practice in the eighteenth century. Texts changed their features as words became “mute, fatte d’inchiostro”, as Manzoni wrote in the thirty-seventh chapter of *I promessi sposi* (1827-1840). It was a reading revolution: a shift from oral culture to a culture in which reading became solitary and silent. In the new literary system of the modern age, readers were granted new freedom to choose subject, manner and timing of their readings. The new literary communication, which coincided with the spreading of journals and newspapers, overturned the pre-modern literary system: narrative production and consumption became an increasingly democratic process; writers had to meet the needs of the newly rising bourgeois class; readers were offered a novel literary experience, thanks in part to the newfound attention for inner reality and psychology, particularly in Samuel Richardson (1689-1761). As Arnold Hauser puts it:

From now onwards the diminution of the distance between the subject and the object becomes the principal aim of all literary effort. With the striving for this psychological directness, all the relations between the author, the hero and the reader are changed: [...] The author treats the reader as an intimate friend and addresses himself to him in a direct, so to say, vocative style. [...] The author speaks to the public over the footlights and the readers often find him more interesting than his characters. They enjoy his personal comments, reflections, ‘stage directions’ and do not take it amiss, for example, when Sterne becomes so preoccupied with his marginal comments that he never reaches the story itself. (Hauser, 1999b: 65-6)

From the point of the most explicit dialogism between the author and the reader, a generalised reduction of the authorial comments is observable in the following period, and particularly in a number of twentieth-century works. While the status of novel strengthens and the composition of the audience transforms over decades, a so-called degree-zero contract is reached first with Flaubert, and then with all other writers, such as Federico De Roberto, who adopt the technique of narrative impersonality. However, this does not mean that the narrative contract vanishes, because “il grado zero del patto è una delle tante sfumature entro cui si declina funzionalmente la relazione fra l’io e il tu” (Rosa, 2008: 35) and the reader is required to appreciate subtler implications of the text. Implicit address to the reader is maintained, even in a degree-zero narrative contract.

When cinema began interacting with literature, invading the cultural offering and the field of narrative representation with its inherent immediacy and narrativity, the narrative contract it established with the audience was by and large zero (and transferred to captions, posters, and trailers, if anything). Since then, the new art has increasingly influenced a whole cohort of writers over generations with its illusory effacement of the authorial and narratorial functions.¹⁰⁴ As a consequence, even without directly imitating the new medium, writers could modify the way they addressed an audience in rapid evolution. To appropriate Walter Ong’s words (cf. 2002: 137-163), in addition to the ‘dear reader’ who was regularly invoked in nineteenth-century narrative implicitly, a ‘dear spectator’ appeared as well in modern and contemporary works, particularly in those featuring clear cinematic traits, such as De Amicis’s *Cinematografo cerebrale*, Hammett’s *The Maltese Falcon*, or Némirovsky’s *Film parlé*. The narrative

¹⁰⁴ The notion of authorship, on the other hand, was particularly relevant for the process of legitimizing film as an art form. This is strongly evident in the debates of the 1910s and the 1920s in France, with the legitimization of Chaplin, and in Italy, where cinema was discussed with reference to Croce’s aesthetics, in which authorship is central (cf. Andreazza 2008: 138, 150).

contract, be it explicit or implicit (zero), always links the work to the historical circumstances of production and the author's intention. Consequently, the reader plays a key role, not only in comprehension and cultural consumption, but also, implicitly, in the process of artistic elaboration:

I processi che costituiscono la letterarietà moderna pongono sempre un legame di interdipendenza fra leggere e scrivere: polo d'attrazione di ogni messaggio, il lettore ne dinamizza le componenti, ne esalta la valenza artistica, gli conferisce significanza estetica. Ecco perché nella conformazione testuale della singola opera è sempre possibile leggere in filigrana la fisionomia di colui a cui è destinata. (Rosa 2008: 33)

This is also the reason why novels and short stories that were conceived before the era of cinema cannot be granted the status of para-cinematic narratives.¹⁰⁵ The (supposed) cinematic features in fiction (or in specific textual passages of some works) must be assessed with critical parameters that do not clash with the historical contingency in which these works were conceived. Therefore, it might be useful to refer to such a hypothetic group of works as *proto-cinematic* works, because these may only have anticipated some features that would become inherently cinematic later. On the other hand, despite being influential to later filmmakers, nineteenth-century writers held painting as the art form of inspiration for their prose. As Kamilla Elliott (2003: 31) makes it clear, observing certain claims by Charles Dickens, Edward Bulwer-Lytton, George Eliot, Thomas Hardy and Joseph Conrad, “everywhere one turns in the nineteenth century, one finds novel writers aspiring to painting via similar interart analogies”.

Clearly, the narrative contract also has much to do with the concept of ‘radical of presentation’, as explained by Northrop Frye (1973: 247): “Words may be acted in front of a

¹⁰⁵ See also Rajewsky (2005: 50), who presumes “that any typology of intermedial practices must be historically grounded”.

spectator; they may be spoken in front of a listener, they may be sung or chanted; or they may be written for a reader”, with the necessary clarifications that the radical of presentation outlines the way “literary works are *ideally* presented” and two radicals may coexist in a work.¹⁰⁶ Frye’s radical of presentation accounts for an ideal concept of the medium, whose features would be inherited and, in a way, shown within the text (just as a printed version of Shakespeare’s *Hamlet*, for instance, reveals its fundamental theatrical trait).¹⁰⁷ The radical can certainly be detected by critics in hindsight; however, it can by no means be attributed anachronistically to genres, for it is by definition inherent in the text *a priori*. It is determined by the communicative act that links the author and the reader. It goes without saying that writers were not able to really write cinematically before cinema was invented; that is, they could not shape their narratives according to a radical of presentation that referred to a complex medium yet to come. Applying cinematic categories to pre-cinematic works is certainly legitimate as long as one does not attempt to produce textual interpretations that would inevitably fall into anachronistic misreadings.¹⁰⁸

¹⁰⁶ See also Genette’s concept of ‘mode’ which, in short, could be assimilated to the semiotic medium (cf. Genette, 1972: 183-224, 1983: 28-9).

¹⁰⁷ In Frye, what is determined by its written radical of presentation is qualified as ‘fiction’, and is set apart from the oral *epos*. Within this restricted domain of fiction, Frye outlines four main categories, namely romance, novel, confession and anatomy. These would represent pure forms with heuristic usefulness that are substantially hybridised in artistic writing. Frye’s system accounts for the fundamental differences mixing external and internal, formal and thematic features, and in this perspective goes beyond an important formalist deadlock. However, Frye did not describe more specific subdivisions of the literary system and was also criticised due to his vague and all-encompassing categories (among others, by Hirsch, 1967: 111, 148; and Fowler, 1982: 118-119; 150).

¹⁰⁸ Eisenstein (1949: 28-44), for example, famously referred to the art of Dickens and Flaubert as well as to Japanese ideograms to explain the art of Griffith and his own theory of montage. He used a broad – today we would say transmedial – idea of montage as juxtaposition to trace back to its non-cinematic ancestors; he did not use the cinematic montage to contextualise or explain those literary or linguistic developments. See these claims: “From Dickens, from the Victorian novel, stem the first shoots of American film aesthetic, forever linked with the name of David Wark Griffith” (Eisenstein, 1949: 195); “Griffith arrived at montage through the method of parallel action, and he was led to the idea of parallel action by – Dickens!” (205).

Building on Frye's insight, it can be said that a new and peculiar radical of presentation has made its way into fiction since the birth of cinema. In the strongest cases of cinematised fiction, the sequence of words is meant to mimic the cinematic flow of images. This imitation can certainly follow different degrees of intensity; however, because the radical of presentation (in other words, the source medium, following intermedia theories) in this case is extraliterary, it does not supplant the constitutive radical of presentation of fiction; it only superimposes it. Therefore, as specific cues of the oral, theatrical or writing cultures can be found in the huge variety of literature across the centuries, by the same token cues of the audiovisual culture, which have been strongly mediated by the cinema, can be found in contemporary texts. This means that, although characterised by para-cinematic narrators, cinematic novels and short stories do not lose their fictional radical of presentation: they clearly remain fiction. However, some of these narratives acquire a specific additional feature. Their narrative contract is adjusted as a consequence of an *interpolated* radical of presentation (Frye warned that there are no pure forms). Thus, the narrative contract of much cinematised fiction conveys a superordinate set of instructions and conditions in the contract of reading, into the radical of presentation of fiction, thereby inducing readers to visualise the narrative implicitly by relying on both their own literacy and cinematic background. In this context, instructions to read the narrative cinematically may or may not be given. However, being influenced by the medium of film in the age where the recognisability of the novel as a literary institution has become stronger (so that the authors do not need to address the readers directly), strong para-cinematic narratives show a peculiar trait: while the function of narrators ranges from the clearest intradiegetic 'exposure' to the most extradiegetic dissimulation, on the other hand the turning to the reader must disappear or remain minimal. As will emerge from the textual analysis in the following chapters, when cinema is formally imitated, a set of textual indications disappears, including the address to the reader. The intermedial reference tends to become stronger in terms of genre when remains implicit.

Following the interpretative perspective that I have outlined so far, the basically degree-zero narrative contract with the reader, which is displayed in some twentieth-century novels, also includes a cinematic dimension whenever the film form contributes to shaping the narratives. However, while this trait inserts itself coherently on the path toward a degree-zero of the narrative contract, which is typical of twentieth-century literature, on the other hand it stands out paradoxically. Straightforward narrative contracts re-emerge in periods of crisis of the genres or literature in general, as Rosa points out (2008: 35). Nevertheless, after that modern art lost its aura (Benjamin 1970), and despite the encounter with cinema, twentieth-century writers have more often embedded cinematic traits directly into their texts than reproposed the old-fashioned address to the reader, possibly relying on the fact that the rising audience of readers *and* spectators would catch their new cinematic approach accordingly, without the need for instructions. The modernist period clearly contributed to planting the roots for this new style through a renewed treatment of time and consciousness, particularly evident in the works of Joyce and Woolf. Fundamentally, the new para-cinematic contract, and the cinematic mode that constitutes the generic framework within which it operates, have taken advantage of a special conjuncture: on one hand, the consolidation of the novel form, especially in the Francophone and Anglo-American contexts; on the other, the magnificent evolution of cinema over the course of very few decades. This evolution brought it from being a cheap source of entertainment to becoming one of the leading arts of the contemporary age.

Further consideration pertains to the configuration of verbal tenses. Weinrich (1978: 186-90) points out that the loosening of the literary ‘frame’ followed the evolution of forms and genres over the centuries, and described the authors’ consequent need for surrogating the frame through background tenses. Boccaccio made little use of background tenses in his *Decameron*, not only because the *imperfetto* was much less commonly used in medieval Italian, but also because the narrative background was provided by the frame where the young party comments on the moral of the stories. Thus, most of the novellas could start directly in the

passato remoto. Five hundred years later, in the nineteenth century, the situation changed considerably:

[gli scrittori] allargano le funzioni dell'imperfetto perché per compensare la perdita della cornice hanno bisogno di più rilievo nei loro racconti [...]. Quel che cambia radicalmente in quest'epoca è la tecnica della letteratura narrativa che, abbandonando la tecnica della cornice, si orienta verso quella dello sfondo, processo che in pari tempo significa un cambio di orientamento dalla morale alla sociologia. (Weinrich, 1978: 189-90)

Now, it is clear that in the context of the great changes in technology, physics, philosophy, and psychology at the turn of nineteenth and twentieth century, the concurrent birth of cinema and cinematic time had such a significant impact on contemporary writers that the narrative configuration of some new novels would benefit from its example. The new experience of film narrative and the discontinuous continuity of the fragments of presentified scenes on the screen engendered stimulating reflections in writers, such as certain modernists but also other subsequent writers, who were willing to accept the challenge of the new medium:

The time experience of the present age consists above all in an awareness of the moment in which we find ourselves: in an awareness of the present. Everything topical, contemporary, bound together in the present moment is of special significance and value to the man of today, and, filled with this idea, the mere fact of simultaneity acquires new meaning in his eyes. [...] This rhapsodic quality, which distinguishes the modern novel most sharply from the older novel, is at the same time the characteristic accountable for its most cinematic effects. The discontinuity of the plot and the scenic development, the sudden emersion of the thoughts and moods, the relativity and the inconsistency of the time-standards, are what remind us in the works of Proust and Joyce, Dos Passos and Virginia Woolf of the cuttings, dissolves and interpolations of the film. (Hauser, 1999: 230-1)

Nevertheless, following the theoretical line I have discussed thus far, it seems that in order to have a more precise and nuanced assessment of cinematic fiction one must compare and verify if the narrative discourse in cinematic fiction unfolds, at least in part, with reference to film narration, as well as if the narrative contract that is established between the author and the reader is actually para-cinematic and based on historical grounds.

3.3. A contribution from hermeneutics

I move now to examine a strong definition of genre coming from hermeneutics. I will outline here in greater detail the critical proposal made by Eric D. Hirsch in the 1960s in his *Validity in Interpretation* (1967). It has great importance and usefulness in the present discourse because it helps to work out a number of problems concerned with historicising cinematic fiction. Moreover, its theoretical outcomes are recognisable in later theoretical discourses on genre that are key to defining the cinematic mode.

Hirsch firmly challenged the fundamental pragmatic principles of New Criticism. His disapproval mainly concerned the problem of authorial intentionality, which New Critics, such as William K. Wimsatt and Monroe C. Beardsley, claimed irrelevant to the study of literature.¹⁰⁹ Some decades later, their approach would be taken to extremes by critics, such as Roland Barthes (cf. 1977), who declared the ‘death of the author’. Hirsch pointed out some basic mistakes derived from an excessively rigid application of the mantra of the time, i.e. ‘what the text means to us today’: particularly, he focused on three misleading forms of “radical historicism”, “psychologism” and “autonomism” (1967: VIII) when approaching texts. By banishing the author from the text, Hirsch claims, critics have simply usurped his place. Even though New Criticism was a healthy turn within the Anglo-American context because it pushed the study of literature toward more objective and scientific approaches, the author’s banishment resulted in a substantial weakening of the possibility to arrive at a valid, shared interpretation of texts, which should be the aim of literary studies. Treating a given

¹⁰⁹ The ‘intentional fallacy’ describes the problem inherent in trying to assess a work of art by referring to the purpose of the artist who created it (cf. Wimsatt and Beardsley, 1946).

text merely as a ‘piece of language’ fosters the idea that its actual meaning could change from period to period, or from reading to reading.

In opposition to such aberrations, Hirsch insists that the ‘meaning’ of a text, strictly speaking, can never change, for it is bound up with the author’s will, which is established once and for all, even if the author changes his or her mind later, for “*meaning* is that which is represented by a text; it is what the author meant by his use of a particular sign sequence; it is what the sign represents” (Hirsch, 1967: 8). What changes every time is rather the ‘significance’ of the text, i.e. the “relationship between that meaning and a person, or a conception, or a situation, or indeed anything imaginable”.¹¹⁰ Hirsch points out that the author’s mind, evidently, can never be accessed, therefore authorial meaning normally cannot be fully ascertained. However, the author’s will should instead be regarded as an ideal limit to aspire to in order to arrive at a *shared* and *probable* interpretation – two central terms in his theory –, because “in textual interpretation the persons involved are an author and a reader. The meanings that are actualised by the reader are either shared with the author or belong to the reader alone” (Hirsch, 1967: 23).

Far from pointing to an alleged ‘tyranny’ of an ‘Author-God’ (cf. Barthes, 1977), this fundamental difference between meaning and significance produces a number of foundational points in Hirsch’s hermeneutics, starting from the fact that “all understanding of cultural entities past or present is ‘constructed’” (1967: 43) on the basis of a communicative dynamic:

¹¹⁰ Hirsch defended his distinction in his subsequent work *The Aims of Interpretation*, re-arguing that “without the stable determinacy of meaning there can be no knowledge in interpretation”. The meaning/significance distinction is “far from artificial; it is natural and universal in our experience. In fact, if we could not distinguish a content of consciousness from its contexts, we could not know any object at all in the world. The context in which something is known is always a different context on a different occasion. Without actualizing such distinctions, we could not recognise today that which we experienced yesterday” (Hirsch, 1976: 1-3).

Now verbal meaning can be defined more particularly as a *willed type* which an author expresses by linguistics symbols and which can be understood by another through those symbols. [...] A type is an entity that has a boundary by virtue of which something belongs to it or does not, and it is also an entity which can be represented by different instances or different contents of consciousness. [...] The determinacy and shareability of verbal meaning resides in its being a type. The particular type that it is resides in the author's determining will. *A verbal meaning is a willed type.* (Hirsch, 1967: 49-51)

Meaning, therefore, is understood by building on the generic traits of the text. The text includes meaning and constitutes a ‘type’ with two characteristics, ‘determinacy’ and ‘shareability’. Hirsch’s insight is balanced on a two-fold intentionalist and constructivist (or functionalist) perspective, whereby both addresser and addressee have their specific roles in validating diverse aspects of communication.¹¹¹ Therefore, he points out that ‘meaning’ and ‘object’ are not the same, since they can share different ‘implications’, as is evident when simply considering the object ‘tree’. A tree can have different implications: it can, for one thing, also include the meaning of ‘roots’ and, secondly, its roots can gain further implications depending on whether they are construed by a child, a botanist, or a poet. This is a clear example that “no meaning represented by a verbal sign is manifest”, because “all meaning must be construed” (Hirsch, 1967: 61) also according to the context of communication. The refusal of any alleged autonomy of the text as a ‘piece of writing’ could not be any stronger, since no meaning must be separated from its creator so as to proliferate unrelated, thereby departing from the ideology that lies behind and fixes it. To revert to cinematic fiction, this means that while interpreting textual passages and pondering a reasonable *significance* of the text, one must never forget that this significance is anchored to its original meaning and that interpretation is like a curve approaching its asymptote. Hence, the question is: are we entitled

¹¹¹ After proclaiming the ‘death of the author’ and the ‘birth of the reader’, even Barthes reintroduced a similar perspective: “in the text, in a way, *I desire* the author: I need his figure [...] as he needs mine” (Barthes, 1975: 27). See also the already-mentioned concept of ‘implied author’ in Booth (1961), and the ‘author-function’ in Michel Foucault, which is “the principle of thrift in the proliferation of meaning” (Foucault, 1998: 221), “a certain functional principle, by which, in our culture, one limits, excludes and chooses”, a “necessary or constraining figure” (222).

to consider any para-cinematic trait as an implication of the meaning given by the author's will? Or, on the contrary, does such a trait stem from the significance of the text?

Let us take a further step: in his gradual approach to the concept of genre, Hirsch claims that "the whole meaning is not simply an array of parts but is also a principle for generating 'parts'", and that this principle is a "special potency" characterising a type (64). Moreover, as meaning is embedded as an instance of a type, he poses a symmetrical equivalence:

An implication belongs to a meaning as a trait belongs to a type. For an implication to belong to verbal meaning, it is necessary that the type be shared, since otherwise the interpreter could not know how to generate implications; he would not know which traits belonged to the type and which did not. And there is only one way the interpreter can know the characteristics of the type; he must learn them. [...] Implications are derived from a shared type that has been learned, and therefore *the generation of implications depends on the interpreter's previous experience of the shared type*. The principle for generating implications is, ultimately and in its broadest sense, a learned convention. (Hirsch, 1967: 66)

While declaring his intellectual debt to Ferdinand de Saussure and Ludwig Wittgenstein (Bakhtin's studies had yet to circulate within Western countries), Hirsch proceeds therefore to define the concept of genre and the importance of "meaning expectations" (72) that derive from our cultural background and are always entailed in cognition. Interpretation is a process of interpretative shifts, at the end of which the interpreter's "last, unrevised generic conception" will be decisive (85). If the process of comprehension is necessarily genre-bound, it follows that "the generic conception serves both a heuristic and constitutive function" (78). Moreover, since genres need to be shared in order to be understood, Hirsch argues that "this shared generic conception, constitutive both of meaning and understanding, is the intrinsic genre of the utterance" (80-1), more precisely defined as "*that sense of the whole by means of which an interpreter can correctly understand any part in its determinacy*" (86). Thus, for a full understanding of utterances, either in fiction, in films or in any other communicative situation, a proper assessment of each implication is needed. This may seem obvious but, to make one example, how can we hope to understand and appreciate, in its *full* meaning, a love story set in the past

whose plot includes historical references and whose narrator explicitly shows a penchant for a certain teleologism, if we misread one of these generic traits, or if we only interpret them through our own contemporary ethos? We will end up reading a rather poor or distorted version of Manzoni's *Promessi sposi*, or worse, we would ascribe out-of-context elements to the author.

At the core of Hirsch's theory of genre there is the section 'Genre logic and the problem of implication' where he states that "the implications of an utterance are determined by its intrinsic genre" (89) and that "every shared type of meaning (every intrinsic genre) can be defined as a system of conventions" (92). Interestingly, Hirsch rectifies his claims below: "A better word might be 'proprieties'. A genre is less like a game than like a code of social behaviour" and "implications are drawn, then, by observing the properties of an intrinsic genre" (93). This is a point that ultimately matches with my perspective on the narrative contract in cinematic fiction. It remains to be seen how implications should be assessed on the grounds of their intrinsic genre. In regard to cinematic fiction, it will be necessary to understand which features must be taken as implications of the type, thereby being extended to other instances, and which others must not; moreover, such implications will arguably deserve to be assessed by a multi-level system, for "the relative importance of an implication can be defined in terms of emphasis, and emphasis can, in turn, be defined as the relative degree of attention that should be paid to an implication" (99). This also confirms what has already been outlined in Chapter 1, in terms of relevance of the intermedial references. The cinematic element gains relevance accordingly; but it also follows the reverse logic of intermedial references: the more emphasis is placed in *explicitly* referring to the cinema, the more implicated cinema is in terms of thematisation; on the contrary, the more the film form is *implicitly* imitated, the more it gains relevance by virtue of its implicitness, and must be read beneath the textual surface.

It should be clear that, in the light of such a theoretical model, the notion of ‘cinematic’ cannot be extended *tout court* to fiction preceding the film age, since similar critical exercises would fail to generate valid implications. Attributing a false context of impossible aesthetic aims and horizons of expectations to these works, as well as cinema-derived narrative strategies and technical terms, would invalidate interpretation because the cinematic traits could not be part of the author’s will and the implications could not be shared with the readers; the narrative contract, thereby re-created or inferred, would be unsustainable. Such an approach would bring us back to Structuralist aberrations, for it would posit cinematic fiction through an abstract and counterproductive framework, deprived of any historical grounds. It was actually writers and readers who had already experienced the language of cinema, and particularly the syntagmatic of shots and montage, who were able to generate new implications and, after a time, construe and deploy the new ‘learned convention’ of the cinematic traits in fiction.

This is about *interpretation*, which is linked with *meaning*. In Hirsch’s system, *criticism* evaluates the *significance* of works; and my critical perspective is mainly concerned with the significance of a particular kind of fiction. However, interpretation and criticism are regularly connected. The preliminary definitions of meaning, type, implication, trait, and intrinsic genre are useful to warrant a correct basis for any valid critical analysis, since “all valid interpretation is thus intrinsic interpretation: whatever one may do with a literary text *after* it has been understood on its own terms achieves validity only because that preliminary task has been performed” (Hirsch, 1967: 113).¹¹² Critical arguments cannot be based on a misunderstanding of meaning: no critic would deny that at the basis of his or her work lies the correct

¹¹² Consequently, “a genre may properly be called extrinsic only when it is wrongly conceived and used as an intrinsic genre. [...] An extrinsic genre is a wrong guess, an intrinsic genre a correct one. One of the main tasks of interpretation can be summarized as the critical rejection of extrinsic genres in the search for the intrinsic genre of the text” (Hirsch, 1967: 88-9).

understanding of what the meaning of the object is; this meaning is necessarily tied to the implicit author's will even when, as is often the case in filmmaking, the 'author' can be the expression of a collective work.

Hirsch's insight is discussed and utilised in subsequent methodological approaches. It constitutes an important reference point, especially in Fowler (2002) and Kress (2010). However, besides being rather abstract, his impressive theoretical analysis runs the risk of pointing to a typology of genres, or types, which is free from the historical development of forms. Ultimately, the intrinsic genre appears to be the result of a narrowing process, almost leading to as many subdivisions as individual works, if it were not for the fact that types are said to be endowed with a certain flexibility and shareability. Nonetheless, this model offers clear indications and a valid methodological framework, and prepares the ground for further considerations.

3.4. Genres and modes

Although the main tenets of modern genre theory have established a proper basis for the assessment of literary works, the notion of genre *per se* is evidently not enough to facilitate the understanding of cinematic fiction. On the other hand, film genre studies do not seem to furnish any key arguments to my critical perspective on form, because fiction has drawn on common formal devices that are mostly shared across film genres. As already indicated in Chapter 1, the range of thematic and formal references to cinema describe an assorted field of possibilities and aesthetic outcomes. However, the cinematisation of fiction concerns the narrative discourse more than the contents; it fundamentally occurs irrespectively of the themes treated in a given narrative. Cinematic fiction does not constitute any subgeneric

group of texts but instead is particularly elusive, cutting across multiple genres. Because it criss-crosses genres and periods, the imitation of cinematic traits in fiction does not go hand in hand with specific themes, which are of the utmost importance in defining genres and subgenres. This poses a problem relating to the form and thematic unity expressed by the works, according to a Bakhtinian perspective. Moreover, in the modern literary system, as far as the editorial process is concerned, genres also gain a specific marketability when connected with extratextual dynamics and the productive system, as German philologist Ulrich Schulz-Buschhaus points out (1999: 55).¹¹³ Ultimately, the para-cinematic narrative contract with the reader does not seem to have consolidated a new or emerging genre or subgenre in literature. In short, what happens in terms of genre, whenever modes such as audiovisual and written texts interplay with each other, still seems unclear. Intuitively, the apparent inclusion of para-cinematic traits or the straightforward imitation of cinema in fiction may appear as aesthetic strategies pointing to the postulated genre of cinematic fiction. Although this insight might be plausible in extreme cases, such as Némirovsky's *Film parlé*, it would overstate a secondary generic feature in works that are commonly recognised, in terms of genre, for totally different aspects, such as Elio Vittorini's *Uomini e no*. Therefore, it is necessary to move from the overarching concept of genre to a more refined and layered systematisation.

It is particularly interesting, then, to consider the model Alastair Fowler outlined in the 1980s in his influential *Kinds of Literature* (2002). Fowler first defines genre through Hirsch's concept of 'type': "When we assign a work to a generic type, we do not suppose that all its characteristic traits need be shared by every other embodiment of the type. In particular, new works in the genre may contribute additional characteristics" (Fowler, 2002: 38). Genres then

¹¹³ Examples are the French *feuilleton* in the nineteenth century; the publication of a specific series in the twentieth century (as in the case of Mondadori's *gialli* in Italy); and the contemporary transmedial circulation of themes and forms connected with some fictional stories or characters that are heavily exploited by the creative industry (such as most of the narratives featuring superheroes).

would be principles of interpretation and not have much to do with mere classification and definition; they would be flexible categories, more like families in Wittgensteinian terms. As Fowler reminds us, at any rate, “in literature, the basis of resemblance lies in literary tradition” (2002: 42): bringing abstract speculation back to a literary context made of contrasts and affinities, codified and shared principles, allows for a reasonable assessment of historical transformations. From the point of view of cinema criticism, Fowler’s fundamental insight was also pursued by Rick Altman, who outlined the shaping and re-shaping of film genres, as linked to the adjectival and substantive process of labelling, in terms of “genrification” (1999: 62).

Fowler narrows the rough genres of literature such as tragedy, comedy, epic, lyric or novel and singles out the “*kind* or historical genre” (Fowler, 2002: 55), as made up of formal and non-formal characteristics. He holds that genre, in this historical sense, corresponding to the label of ‘kind’, should be conceived as a “repertoire” of features combining in a distinguishable way. In the shaping of genres, the most important of these features are the unavoidable “size” and “external form”, with whom other features (“representational aspect”, “metrical structure”, “scale”, “subject”, “values”, “mood”, “occasion”, “attitude”, etc.; Fowler, 2002: 54-74) would necessarily blend. In Fowler’s model, subgeneric labels (say, ‘twentieth-century female crime fiction’) describe more binding thematic features rather than formal features. Moreover, a subgenre is normally determined by adding a substantive label to a kind,¹¹⁴ and can also grow in popularity and recognition to the degree that it gains the status of a kind in people’s minds. On the other hand, Fowler points out that in the historical process of the creation of literary forms, different tags have been attributed to the main kinds of

¹¹⁴ This works in English: in Italian, for instance, an adjective or a *complemento di specificazione* is added (“romanzo o film poliziesco, d’amore, dell’orrore” etc.); however, the penetration of English has now largely modified the way Italians define books and films (“thriller”, “film horror”, etc.).

literature, so as to describe their additional and distinguishable traits. These generic traits ‘colour’ the work of art and point to an inner set of qualities that are transferable across the kinds (e.g. *comic* play, *comic* epic, *pastoral* elegy, *pastoral* eclogue, etc.). He observes that such tags tend to be adjectival and he names them ‘modes’, explaining that they are a “more elusive generic idea” and “never imply a complete external form. [...] Normally, a modal term implies that some of the non-structural features of a kind are extended to modify another kind” (Fowler, 2002: 106-7). Thus, the mode also gives account of socio-cultural transformations:

External forms rapidly change. All kinds have also been linked to social institutions, along with which they have become obsolete – or, as we say, ‘outmoded’. The modes, however, appear to be distillations, from these relatively evanescent forms, of the permanently valuable features. (Fowler, 2002: 111)

Fowler’s literary category of mode can be extended theoretically to other arts, but it fundamentally describes a process pertaining to a single art, as it is primarily linked to the tradition of its forms and genres: it does not seem to explain whether the same process can occur crosswise, from art to art. However, his definition of mode is key to assessing cinematic fiction. Building on Rajewsky’s perspective on intermedial references outlined in Chapter 1, the inclusion of para-cinematic traits in fiction can thus be assessed as a distillation of common formal and rhetorical traits of film, inasmuch as the film can be taken as a ‘kind’ of art that interplays with the literary field. The possibility of an interaction has certainly been facilitated by the narrativity that is inherent in most film and fiction, and has continuously been seen both on a thematic and a formal level. In particular, following the multimodal approach of social semiotics, cinematisation may be treated as ‘transduction’, that is “the process of moving meaning-material from one mode to another – from *speech* to image; from *writing* to

film” (Kress 2010: 124-5).¹¹⁵ Adaptations of novels, for example, are transductions. Yet, moving a story (even with very significant differences in the plot) from book to film, and transferring only generic crystallizations (Fowler’s meaning of modes) from a group of medially-related works to another, are different activities entirely. Conversely, it is one thing to produce a novelisation of a film and another to produce a cinematic novel drawing on recognisable features of the film form. Cinematic fiction is a cross category in literature that results from a formal transduction of the filmic mode. In simple terms, the ‘cinematic’ or ‘filmic’ is an additional ingredient of fiction that the coming-of-age of film form has opened up. It is a possibility of ‘colouration’, a stylistic option.¹¹⁶

In this framework, the category of mode in literature describes thematic and tonal qualities and includes, for instance, “such forms as the heroic, the tragic, the comic, the lyrical, the picaresque, the elegiac, the encyclopaedic, the satiric, the romance, the fantastic, the pastoral, the epigrammatic, the didactic, and the melodramatic” (Frow, 2015: 72) – and, I add, the ‘cinematic’. As the picaresque mode can be found in certain adventure novels, or the gothic mode in some crime fiction, the cinematic mode is similarly observable in a range of works of fiction that still retain their particular, and more easily recognisable, generic and sub-generic traits. In other words, such ‘distillations’, or modes, can be obtained from medium-related crystallized kinds – within literature, within painting, within cinema, etc. – but also from

¹¹⁵ In particular, Kress’s insight into multimodality shares some remarkable points with Hirsch’s fundamental assumptions about the process of interpretation, as well as with the conceptually restricted use of the category of mode in Fowler, whose outcomes are in some way overtaken and extended. For in Kress’s theory, all communication is a response to a “prompt” that needs to be “framed” by the addressee in order for the meaning to be interpreted and understood (Kress, 2010: 36) and also according to a certain “interest” (70) on the part of the recipient. The function of genre proves less abstract than practical and orientative, for it “mediates between the social and the semiotic” (116), a definition to which even Bakhtin would have probably subscribed.

¹¹⁶ Fowler (2002: 112) speaks of a “modal coloration”. See also Frow (2015: 73), who advocates Fowler’s model: “*mode* in the adjectival sense as a thematic and tonal qualification, or ‘colouring’ of genre”.

crystallized qualities of media, with a different array of influences and formal suggestions at stake. As a consequence, when different arts interact, a given medium and a given medium-related genre can be reduced to a mode in Fowler's meaning and included in another medium and medium-related genre. For example, one can consider photorealistic portraits in terms of a photographic mode included in a specific subgenre in painting; or, generally speaking, of literary or pictorial modes in cinema, and so on. Ultimately, the mode in the literary theory of genre can be fundamentally extended to encompass and describe – *in terms of genre-related discourses* – the intermedial references put forth by Rajewsky.¹¹⁷ Building on Fowler's insight, the approximation and the 'as if' effects are produced by the modulation (i.e. the distillation) of medial characteristics.

Narrative film has indeed become a player in the 'game' of the spread of narrative content and has introduced new narrative and aesthetic conventions. Because of its power of attraction as a 'qualified medium', cinema has rapidly gained the status of a cultural institution and, far from becoming obsolete, has generated a number of modal implications that have been readily re-elaborated by receptive writers. By adopting Fowler's theoretical model, it should be possible to describe what has been repeatedly mentioned as 'cinematic' as a latent *mode* included in twentieth-century fiction. The 'cinematic mode' describes a variety of 'signals' that bring to light some additional qualities of texts, particularly on a formal level. Therefore, the historical articulation of media and genres, in which the cinematic mode is included, has much to do with the 'cinematic desire' and the search for 'immediacy' already

¹¹⁷ Compare with Rajewsky's words: "In the case of intermedial references a medial difference does come into play; and more precisely, a medial difference that – as a matter of fact – cannot be effaced. What can be achieved by intermedial references is an (more or less pronounced, yet necessarily asymptotical) approximation to the medium referred to; an overall actualization or realization of the other medial system is impossible. [...] To stress this again, painting cannot become genuinely photographic, just as literary texts cannot really become filmic or musical. What can be achieved in this respect is only an illusion, an 'as if' of the other medium (Rajewsky, 2010: 62-3).

seen as grounded in cultural dynamics that precede the cinema. It seems thus that the cinematic mode in fiction has explicitly expressed a number of tendencies that had already been operating for a long time, linked with different epistemological bases. Once available as a technology and recognisable as a ‘qualified medium’, the cinema has sustained and emphasised those tendencies by means of its specific conventions and ways of shaping, structuring, and transmitting contents to readers. In the process of intermedial imitation by writers, its basic features have been ‘distilled’, drawing on a general, but evolving, notion of film form.

CONCLUSION TO PART I

When assessed according to the theoretical framework of genres, the process of remediation of the film form in fiction gives rise to the cinematic mode in fiction. Because it is ‘a trait of a type’, in Hirsch’s terms, the mode is complementarily determined, partly by the writer and partly by the reader. Consequently, it must be grounded, *at least potentially*, in the author’s will: the cinematic mode must at least be implicated in the text’s meaning. As already mentioned, however, cinematic features can also retrospectively and anachronistically be attributed to works preceding the film age. In fact, the cinematic mode is always the result of an *a posteriori* recognition as well: it is a learned convention through which the recipient may or may not perceive determined qualities by virtue of his or her cultural background. The same holds true for other arts: if one is free to claim that, say, Canaletto’s panoramas of Venice ‘look like photographs’, it still makes little sense to interpret Canaletto’s painting with reference to photography, which was a medium yet to come.

The cinematic mode thus describes what remains of the film form when the ‘external form’, or ‘substance of expression’, or ‘material modality’, is removed: it is a principle of suggestion. By integrating Rajewsky’s model, over the course of the next chapters I will demonstrate that the intermedial references to cinema create diverse effects according to the narrative configuration of the texts and also contribute to the definition of the generic traits of some works of fiction. Thematisation and evocation can be applied to different kinds of fiction without the narrative structures of the texts being substantially modified cinematically. However, these two categories also describe more complex narrative systems that fundamentally include the cinematic mode with limited but subtler effects, as in the case of Elsa Morante’s *Aracoeli*. Evocation and a limited formal imitation assume a generalised importance in Antonio Tabucchi’s *Piazza d’Italia* where a remediation of filmic montage can

be observed. Implicit formal imitation of cinema finds its determining requirements in temporal and discursive configurations, as the cases of Dashiell Hammett's *The Maltese Falcon*, Elio Vittorini's *Uomini e no*, and Pier Paolo Pasolini's *Teorema* will prove. In the cases of intense formal imitation, such as Irène Némirovsky's *Film Parlé*, Alain Robbe-Grillet's *La Jalousie*, or Italo Calvino's *La signora Paulatim* (1958), a whole set of medial features and techniques is translated and therefore applied to the entire referencing text.

On the level of narratological analysis, the cinematic mode is connected with the narratorial function; therefore, I propose to replace the imprecise category of 'camera-eye', which only accounts for the monstrative function of the mega-narrator's compounded entity, with the more flexible notion of *para-cinematic narrator*, which more transparently renders a layered concept, given that:

- 1) it implies the *interplay of non-splitting functions* (monstration and narration) as conceived by Gaudreault (*cinematic narrator*);
- 2) it implies a literary *approximation* by imitation (*para-*) to this overarching cinematic function – so that the prefix also accounts for the intermedial reference which is enacted, as well as the 'distillation' of generic and medial features in terms of 'mode';
- 3) it implies an *additional feature* (*para-*) that overlaps but does not cancel the intrinsic features of literary narration, which remains consistent with expression through words – so that the prefix also accounts for the intracompositional relation which is enacted, as well as the 'colouring' function relating to the concept of 'mode' in genre theory.

Therefore, the concept of para-cinematic narrator is considerably different from that of camera-eye. The camera-eye metaphorically describes certain narrative situations with reference to the filmic device: in Stanzel (1984: 232-7) it is attached to a few specific narrative situations such as interior monologue, as in parts of Joyce's *Ulysses*, and third-person

'behaviourist' narration, as in Hemingway's *The Killers*, with the additional, peculiar case of Robbe-Grillet's *La Jalousie* which seemingly combines the two.¹¹⁸ The concept of para-cinematic narrator shifts the balance from the narrative situations to style, and enables us to focus on phenomena of film remediation that could not be addressed otherwise, but are observable in a wider variety of fiction.

The cinematic sensation in novels or short stories that seem to unfold 'like a film' is triggered by the diegetic activity of a para-cinematic narrator. In other words, the para-cinematic narrator is the outcome of the remediation of a film-specific feature into a different medium. This is the consequence of a new cinematic approach to literary writing on the part of certain modern and contemporary authors, and the implication of the cinematic mode in literature. In strongly cinematised fiction, vivid representation, action, contextualisation of sounds and narrative segmentation tend to follow a filmic rhetoric and flow as they do in film; comments, digressions, or explicit uses of cinematic terms would prove too 'wordy', and therefore non-cinematic. Explicit textual passages or references to the cinema, in fact, are simply analogies or similes that are used to explain a sort of cinematic process in words. In these cases, readers simply perceive an effective, and overly direct voice speaking that prevents them from having a para-cinematic experience of reading. The para-cinematic narrative contract is thus compromised. More often than not, such explicit narrating voice draws the narration back to a non-cinematic contract, as I will demonstrate in the case of Morante's *Aracoeli*.

In this perspective, the author's effacement and the flattening of the narrative relief enacted by para-cinematic narrators seem key to defining stricter criteria and assessing what is more

¹¹⁸ In Stanzel's typological circle, camera-eye narratives are thus examples of reflector-mode mediacy, i.e. covert mediacy. As such, they are opposed to teller-mode narratives, where the narrator overtly mediates.

cinematic and what is less, as my examples of cinematic fictions will prove in the following chapters. The fictional contract that is expressed by strongly cinematised fiction is a para-cinematic narrative contract that prompts readers to complement the act of reading with cinematic schemata. The broad remediation of filmic temporality is fundamental in this sense, since the flattening of the narrative relief works as the most secure device through which other possible para-cinematic techniques can be enacted to maximise the cinematic effect. The highest levels of cinematisation by means of the flattening of the narrative relief will be observable in present-tense narratives and in past-tense narratives where foreground tenses stand out. Lower levels of cinematisation will be observable in narratives recounted in retrospective and background tenses, or where these tenses are overwhelmingly used; the lowest levels of cinematisation will be observable in narratives that alternate verbal tenses traditionally to create an evident narrative relief. This typology, at any rate, must be intended as functional only when not disaggregated from the other variables I have outlined thus far, that is: the kind of intermedial reference to the cinema enacted by the text; the interplay of focalisation, ocularisation and auricularisation; and the narrative contract which is ultimately established with the reader. The interaction of the cinematic mode in fiction is a matter of nuance and grades. In terms of genre categories, the works that display sufficient traits of film remediation include the ‘filmic’ or ‘cinematic’ as a mode within their generic and subgeneric features; i.e. they include a distillation of some basic elements of film as a medium and as an art within their specific literary characteristics.

Among other things, to my mind, this typology of forms and genres also definitely clarifies the difference between cinematic fiction, which is fiction characterised by a number of filmic structures and conceivably thematic and tonal hints referring to a specific set of dialogues, *topoi*, editing cuts, characters, etc., versus the cinema novel, which is a subgenre determined by its subject and plot about the cinema industry that may have nothing cinematic. Clearly, it may be that the cinematic mode appears in cinema novels as an additional characteristic, but

the two should be kept apart in terms of theoretical analysis. They substantiate the extreme poles of the intermedial reference to the cinema: the most implicit formal imitation and the most explicit thematisation frame a number of intermediate nuances and overlappings. Moreover, from this perspective, it will be even clearer why screenplays are not the same as cinematic novels or cinema novels. They are not novels at all. Accordingly, novelisations (or the *romans tiré du film*) clearly demonstrate different creative issues related to the cinema and publishing industries (a valid reason to consider them in a separate context and through their own generic terms). Thus, what is referred to here as cinematic fiction fundamentally concerns works which have been thought out, made up, presented and marketed to be enjoyed mainly as novels or short stories by the reader, *regardless of* any possible transformation by the cinema or the entertainment industries into a film, a series, a videogame or anything structuring a modern, convergent system around a story, a character or an aesthetic idea.¹¹⁹ Above all, cinematic fiction does not mean ‘fiction that may be easily adapted for the screen’. Rather, the cinematic mode is an inherent feature in novels and short stories that have enacted a more or less marked intermedial reference to film and have displayed it to varying degrees.

Therefore, cinematic fiction appears to designate no subgeneric form, since it neither points to any particular binding thematic content, nor does it show any clear recognisability

¹¹⁹ My idea of the cinema novel is thus completely different from Bruce Morissette’s, who focused on “cinema novels (which the French call *ciné-romans*) and published scenarios designed to be read by readers who have not necessarily seen the film in question, who are primarily readers of fiction and not spectators watching films” (Morissette, 1985: 28); indeed he claimed: “The two films already mentioned, *Hiroshima mon amour* and *Marienbad*, are typical examples of the French cinema novel (in their printed form). Both make considerable use of sudden flashbacks, false or imaginary scenes, even hallucinations. As cinema novels or scenarios, they illustrate several problems characteristic of the genre” (32-3). For Morissette, the cinema novel is a basically halfway form between a screenplay and the *nouveau roman*: “rather than a novel *tout court*” it is “closer, in its published form, to the domain of a Robbe-Grilletian novel than to that of an ‘unprocessed’ scenario” (34). On novelisation in Italy, see Raffaele De Berti (2004); on the Italian *cineromanzi* see Emiliano Morreale (2007).

and institutional or social use in book series as well as in sellers' classifications.¹²⁰ In this sense, it proves to be an elusive family of works when treated as a generic category. However, the concept of mode stemming from genre theory resolves this difficulty. It works as a unifying category that enables us to gather works from disparate genres, periods and movements under the same umbrella term. Hence, it describes an important vector that steered the evolution of fiction in the twentieth century. In the next chapters, I will discuss a sample of works that have welcomed a modulation of the film form in order to test my typology of cinematic fiction. Before proceeding further to examine some works that show clear cinema-derived elements, in the next chapter I will focus on the decades that precede the advent of cinema and follow the establishment of a fairly codified grammar of the filmic language, and I will single out three examples of *proto-cinematic*, *pseudo-cinematic* and *cinematic fiction*. I will briefly discuss specific issues relating to De Roberto's and De Amicis's texts and proceed to examine Pirandello's novel in greater detail.

¹²⁰ And arguably will never do, just as there are hardly any commercial categories for other 'modes' in literature, audiovisual products, music, painting, or photography. There are commercial categories usually only for genres and occasionally for subgenres.

– PART II –

INTERMEDIAL REFERENCES

4. KINDS OF CINEMATIC FICTIONS

4.1. Proto-cinematic fiction: Federico De Roberto, *Processi verbali*

In the straightforward simplicity of the preface to his third collection of short stories published in 1890, Federico De Roberto (1861-1927) almost apologised for the title “un po’ curialesco” of his *Processi verbali*.¹²¹ These ‘verbal proceedings’, however, immediately point to one of the aims of the *verista* writer: “una relazione semplice, rapida e fedele di un avvenimento, svolgentesi sotto gli occhi di uno spettatore disinteressato. [...] La nuda e impersonale trascrizione di piccole commedie e di piccoli drammi colti sul vivo” (De Roberto, 1990: 11).¹²² As is readily observable, this could also be the definition of the camera-eye narrative situation in literature. The ‘detached observer’ is a pure eye peering at the scene, a legacy of the detached observation typical of French naturalism, from which the Italian *veristi* drew their fundamental stylistic principles. The stories collected in *Processi verbali* are narrated following the impersonality rule, according to which authorial comments are banished; but, in these stories, any access to the characters’ thoughts and psychology is also very limited:

¹²¹ De Roberto was the younger of the Sicilian trio of *veristi*, including his recognised master Giovanni Verga, and the theoretician of Italian *verismo*, Luigi Capuana. The most significant part of De Roberto’s production was published by the young author in the few years between 1889 and 1894. Among the most valuable works of his, I recall the short story collections, *La sorte* (1886) and *Documenti umani* (1888), which still consistently draw on and modulate the style and rustic themes observed in Verga; the psychological novel *L’illusione* (1981) about the bovaristic figure of Teresa searching for love and understanding; and his masterpiece *I viceré* (1894), the saga of the Uzeda di Francalanza family, revolving around the passage of power from the pre-Unification Italy to the new Regno d’Italia. De Roberto’s *oeuvre* also includes other collections of stories, minor novels (*Ermanno Raeli*, 1889) or incomplete novels (*L’imperio*, 1929), a treaty on love (*L’amore. Fisiologia. Psicologia. Morale*, 1895), and a vast production of articles and literary essays.

¹²² I quote from the Sellerio edition (De Roberto 1990).

Se l'impersonalità ha da essere un canone d'arte, mi pare che essa sia incompatibile con la narrazione e con la descrizione. [...] L'impersonalità assoluta, non può conseguirsi che nel puro dialogo, e l'ideale della rappresentazione obiettiva, consiste nella *scena* come si scrive pel teatro. L'avvenimento deve svolgersi da sé, e i personaggi debbono significare essi medesimi, per mezzo delle loro parole e delle loro azioni, ciò che essi sono.¹²³

De Roberto takes the stylistic solutions already used by his fellow writers Giovanni Verga and Luigi Capuana to an extreme.¹²⁴ The twelve short stories are all about small scenes or anecdotes set in villages in Sicily and involve only a few characters. They might be allocated into two groups: those more clearly revolving around God-fearing (*Il rosario*), malicious (*Mara*), or utterly jealous (*Il viaggio di San Vito*) female characters; and those revolving around dumb and subjugated (*Lupetto*; *Pietro Micca*), susceptible (*Il convegno*) and melancholic male characters (*I vecchi*).¹²⁵

Significantly, all stories start *in medias res*, signalling their constitutive narrative contract with the reader, who is called to merge with the decentered and concealed position from which the representation is offered. Some of them, in particular, begin with sudden noises (“Un leggiere colpo di martello”, *Il rosario*), questions (“Principale, leviamo mano?”, *La ‘trovatura’*), or exclamations (“Alla tua salute”, *Il convegno*; “Il figliuolo della Lupa!”, *Lupetto*; “Mamma, per carità!”, *Mara*; “Come sei venuta tardi!”, *Pentimento*), or extremely brief descriptions of interiors where some people are introduced to other characters (*L'onore*, *Il krak*). These stylistic characteristics, which are so traditionally typical of the beginnings *in medias res*, at any rate are

¹²³ Evidently, “incompatibile con la narrazione” must not be taken strictly speaking. By this expression, De Roberto simply means that the authorial voice, which betrays the author's judgments as well as his or her “fioriture di stile”, must be effaced.

¹²⁴ Referring to *Processi verbali* and the collection *L'albero della scienza*, which was published in the same year of 1890, Carlo Mandrignani (1993: XVI) points out that “sono racconti d'impianto verista, più verghiani di quanto Verga abbia mai osato fare”. However, in a significant alternation with the objective method of *Processi verbali*, the stories of *L'albero della scienza* are narrated with a psychological, ‘subjective’ method.

¹²⁵ Most figures are examples of ‘defeated’ men and women (*vinti* in Italian), already dealt with in Verga's work; i.e. they are characters subjugated by familial, social, institutional forces, or dragged off by the ‘fiumana del progresso’, as Verga writes in the preface of *I Malavoglia* (1881). For a concise introduction to Italian *verismo*, see Giovanni Carsaniga (2003).

not to be taken as para-cinematic features of the texts. Despite clearly satisfying the stylistic requirements of De Roberto's writing, they cannot be assessed as cinematic implications belonging to the meaning given by the author (who could not know cinema) and, therefore, as traits of a cinematic fiction still to come (traits of a type, in Hirsch's terms). Thus, it is not surprising that soon after the beginning no story reveals any trait of montage or para-cinematic ocularisation: there is no cinematic visual rhetoric in them at all, which means that they are not recounted by a para-cinematic narrator that shapes his representation with, at least, a possible reference to the representation via moving-images in early films.

It is true, however, that great emphasis is given to showing, to *monstration*. Little events are shown, counterpointed by very basic visual elements and rather realistic dialogues that recall typical motifs of Sicilian *verismo*, such as 'la roba', 'l'onore', or the cruel harassment of submissive creatures. Since verbal sparrings and prolonged tales told by the characters are so central, little room is left for the description of the environment. As a matter of fact, in these 'verbal proceedings', orally-expressed events and stories are key. Thus, a metadiegetic level is also frequently disclosed as soon as a character starts recounting a past event, or a painful or surprising anecdote, so that all the initial mise-en-scène turns out to be preparatory to his or her narration. At the very beginning of *Pietro Micca*, the narrator even anticipates the source of his story and explicitly gives the floor to a countryman who, in turn, addresses his fictional audience after the sudden appearance of a poor chap who is still known, and mocked, in town because of an old act of bravado of his:

Questa la raccontava don Giacomo Spatafora, ai villeggianti seduti al fresco, sotto i platani, dinanzi al Casino di conversazione di Sant'Antonio al Monte.

Come passava il fattorino che saliva ogni giorno, a cavallo all'asina, a Barreale per portarvi e prendervi la posta, Giovannino Paternò aveva detto:

"To': Pietro Micca!"

"A proposito!" chiese il barone Ventimiglia. "Volevo domandarlo da un pezzo: si chiama proprio Pietro Micca, come quello dell'assedio di Torino?"

Don Giacomo Spatafora, che era il sindaco del paese, rispose [...]. (88)

Thus, whilst the author is concealed, the narrator still clearly retains its function of organising the narrative discourse, with the option of transferring this function to a fictional character. A balanced alternation of the *imperfetto* and *passato remoto* contributes to the significant narrative relief of the stories. The short stories included in *Processi verbali* are mainly told by a literary narrator alluding to theatrical representation because of the immediacy of dialogues. De Roberto himself claims thusly, emphasising the stories' unity of time and place. Indeed, these narratives effectively refer to the theatrical scene, in that the visualisation offered to the reader-spectator seems to remain anchored to a fixed perspective: it is the fixed perspective on the chatting people in *Pietro Micca*, or on the group of *comari* in *Mara*, or on the under-stair compartment where the laundress and the landlady talk in *Pentimento*. Some other stories, such as *Il convegno* and *Donna di casa*, include two or three different locations, but they also maintain a similar, elemental articulation of points of view. Only dialogues are put into the foreground; they stand out from a concise background of descriptions that constitute fixed sceneries, as in the beginning of *I vecchi*:

Erano seduti sulla panchetta a strisce gialle e rosse, sotto i platani nudi, e il viale e il giardino si allungava dinanzi, allagato dal sole, tra due file di statue, sulle basi delle quali l'edera si abbarbicava. In fondo, la montagna tutta candida di neve, come una campana di zucchero. (41)

All the actions that follow, as well as the anecdote told by one of the two elders, will occur on that bench, which can rather easily be visualised frontally throughout. Zero ocularisation and external focalisation are rather rigidly maintained in all stories (a further proof that there is no need of the cinema to conceive and apply these techniques). From this point of view, the opening story, *Il rosario*, might even be compared structurally with Hemingway's oft-cited story *The Killers* (1927). In both narratives the reader is urged to understand what is going on in a room where the aims and worries of a few characters are not explained. However, in De Roberto's collection, there is no emphasis on bodily gestures and movements, i.e., there is only

a latent behaviourist style (which will appear, instead, in Hemingway). More generally, in De Roberto's stories, *bodies and objects do not talk*, because they are never visualised or 'framed' according to a significant expressive intention; therefore, they neither gain a surplus of interest nor contribute to a para-cinematic style. Furthermore, no apparent zoom or travelling effects are found, and the verbalisation of POV shots and reaction shots is very rare and lacks precise visual elements:

Fece una piccola pausa, aspettando di essere interrogato; come l'altro lo guardava rispettosamente, pendendo dalle sue labbra riprese: [...] (*I vecchi*, 43)

Il piccolo Nunzio e gli altri ragazzi si sbellicavano dalle risate, e i manovali sorridevano anch'essi, con la bocca piena, o accendendo pipe, come finivano di merendare. (*La 'trovatura'*, 76)

Il pretore guardò il cancelliere, che se la godeva, grattandosi un'orecchia col portapenne, e faceva delle smorfie con la bocca, come per dire: 'Che gente!' (*L'onore*, 101)

I wish to emphasise that according to contemporary film jargon, these three examples might also be interpreted, respectively, (1) as a reverse shot on the character who is listening to his companion's discourse; (2) as a series of reaction shots framing the workers; and (3) as a cutaway from the main scene about two families arguing in front of the magistrate. However, similar interpretations would inevitably force the meaning of the texts, which are bound up with the plausibility of their author's intention and their well-researched, pre-cinematic historical dimension; secondly, similar exercises would fail to provide any critical argument that may substantially increase our understanding of De Roberto; thirdly, presuming that an alleged cinematic dimension is part and parcel of De Roberto's (and other comparable) pre-cinematic works would substantially undermine any possibility to arrive at a constructive and historically meaningful clarification of the cinematic mode in fiction.

Therefore, I would briefly conclude here by stressing that in De Roberto, on the other hand, there are observable elements of immediacy, realism and impersonality that will be

expanded and more fully integrated in some following works across genres and literary traditions that include what I call the ‘cinematic mode’ in their structures. In these other works, the para-cinematic visibility, the treatment of time and the narrative relief will be more convincingly linked to the film form. However, *Processi verbali* seems to constitute a collection of *proto-cinematic* short stories, since it testifies to a tendency to a brisk and detached representation, mostly based on the driving force of the characters’ dialogues and actions. However, the few visual elements emerging from the texts counterpoint the narratives without gaining the narrative foreground. Overall, by drawing on the old, traditional culture of the word in theatrical representation and preluding the forthcoming cinematic culture of early moving-images, De Roberto’s *Processi verbali* is placed at the historical and epistemological border that precedes and prepares the film age and the cinematic mode in fiction.

4.2. Pseudo-cinematic fiction: Edmondo De Amicis, *Cinematografo cerebrale*

A form of *pseudo-cinematic* fiction is found in a short story by Edmondo De Amicis (1846-1908), entitled *Cinematografo cerebrale*, which was first published in the journal ‘L’Illustrazione Italiana’ in 1907 and then posthumously in the three-volume collection of his late stories in 1909.¹²⁶ As expressed in the title, cinema is referred to here as a metaphor for the protagonist’s reflection on some moments of his life, which unravel through a series of mental associations. The protagonist – “Il Cavaliere (come lo chiamavano in casa le persone di servizio)” (589) – is sitting in his armchair before the fireplace while his wife and daughter are at the theatre. He tries to set his imagination on pleasant thoughts, but his mind appears to him as a house whose doors and windows are wide open, so unexpected figures are free to enter. The text immediately reveals interesting analogies with Freud’s and Bergson’s contemporary insights about the unconscious and cinematic imagination. A series of characters appear at these ‘windows’: an old boarding-school fellow (“che era rimasto sommerso, come annullato nella sua mente”, 590) comes to the fore as if in an extreme close-up (“non vedeva che la fronte, gli occhi e il naso; la parte inferiore mancava come in una maschera lacerata”, 590); another friend reminds him of a tavern where they used to have lunch; a detail from that place (“il neo che aveva sul mento la figliuola del trattore”, 593) recalls the black spot he had seen on a dish

¹²⁶ De Amicis is mainly known for his extremely successful diary-form novel *Cuore* (1886), which has been a very well-known book for young readers even outside of Italy. His production is characterised from the outset by the recurring moral theme of the human ‘heart’, typically treated with a blend of sentimentalism, ideals of patriotism and pedagogic tension, also corresponding to the rhetorical exigencies of the new-born Italian State. A remarkable *bozzettista* in the nineteenth-century Italian tradition, De Amicis wrote a great number of short stories, such as *Bozzetti di vita militare* (1867), the series of *Novelle* (1872) and *Fra scuola e casa* (1892), as well as several reports from Spain, Netherlands, London, Paris, Morocco, Constantinople, and South America, to which he added numerous works published in journals and essays (see, on language, *L’idioma gentile*, 1905). From the 1890s, in particular, his fictional and non-fictional production was increasingly linked with socialism and socialist aims (see the posthumous novel *Primo maggio*, 1980). See De Amicis (1996) for a more comprehensive account of his life and work. All quotes refer to this edition.

while having his breakfast some hours before; this black spot in turn recalls another little black dish used to collect money at his neighbourhood's newsstand; then his waitress ("che in presenza di sua moglie non guardava mai", 593) comes out from a trapdoor (a scenic trick seen at the theatre or learnt from Meliès?). Images suddenly arise following disparate suggestions in a chain of impulses and regressions, and are superimposed on one another: the image of Karl Marx superimposed on the fireplace clock prompts the visualisation of a labour rally, in which "l'immagine del bel fianco d'una operaia" (591) immediately stands out; and from the fireplace's ashes, a whole scenery of mountains, valleys and plains is soon phantasmagorically created. More than the cinematic dissolve, which had already been introduced by that time but only seldom and rudimentarily used in films, these textual passages seem to verbalise the technique of superimposition in photography, which had widely been exploited for surprising effects in the so-called 'spirit photography' for some decades.¹²⁷ De Amicis's textual passages do not in fact replicate the transition on the page by cinematic dissolve from one animated scene to another; they superimpose static images.¹²⁸

Other real objects and details turn into bodily traits:

e con questo pensiero fissando gli occhi sopra un mazzo di fiori della tappezzeria, ci vide dopo un po' i lineamenti vaghi d'una brutta faccia che gli faceva una smorfia; i quali si trasformarono in una figura oscena, che gli fece inarcare le ciglia. (599)

The iconic precision and reality effect of film are not replicated: lineaments are vague, the face is simply described as ugly, and the subsequent figure is merely described as 'obscene' without detail. However, the detail of the protagonist's eyebrows also contains one of the very

¹²⁷ An example of film made by superimpositions and sudden appearances is Meliès's *Le manoir du diable* (1896). See Simone Natale (2012) for a perspective on spirit photography and early cinema.

¹²⁸ Cf. with Ivaldi (2011: 114), who describes this passage as "un fenomeno che oggi, anacronisticamente, chiameremmo di *dissolvenza*".

few ‘reverse shots’ featured in the text. Similarly, three prior passages are particularly significant. The first relates to the vision of his waitress, and we also ‘see’ the man’s reaction: “si riscosse poi bruscamente come un uomo colto in fragrante delitto, e pensando a sua moglie, si guardò intorno con occhio inquieto” (594). The second refers to a series of heroic visions: “Salvare un bambino da un incendio, per esempio; buscarsi una coltellata difendendo una donna; spezzarsi una mano per arrestare un cavallo in fuga. E si guardò una mano”. This rather objectivised reaction, however, is immediately brought again to the usual internal ocularisation that informs the narrative: “Il suo sguardo e il suo pensiero si fermarono su quella grossa mano dal dorso peloso e dalla pelle avvizzita” (596). In the third example, the character’s reaction is triggered by the sound of a crack coming from the room’s furniture: “Lo scosse lo schianto d’un mobile. Si voltò” (597). As Giusi Baldissone (De Amicis, 1996: 1193) points out, this latter passage exemplifies what, in Freud, is described as *Unheimliche*, the ‘uncanny’; it reveals a hidden element in the character’s everyday life. In fact, in this story the man’s sexual impulse for the waitress is repressed in favour of the bourgeois relation between him and his wife, who shall return from the theatre shortly. As Ivaldi (2011: 111-9) also notes, in *Cinematografo cerebrale* some other solutions, albeit in a fairly naïve manner, appear precursory of sound editing:

[...] e tirò uno sbadiglio sonoro. Quel suono terminò al suo orecchio in una nota da cui, quasi spontaneamente, gli si volse nel capo il motivo della *Marsigliese* ed egli vide intorno a sé uomini feriti, sangue, picche buttate a terra, e lontano molti uomini urlanti, generali impennacchiati, flagellati dalla pioggia, fra i lampi. E dopo un momento sentì una voce, come d’una persona seduta accanto a lui, che gli domandò: ‘E se avessero ragione i socialisti? (De Amicis, 1996: 591).¹²⁹

¹²⁹ See also: “E mentre faceva queste riflessioni, nella mente che gli si cominciava a confondere gli suonò distintamente un nome: ‘Alcibiade!’ Ripeté meravigliato: ‘Alcibiade!’ (592), which recall Don Abbondio’s exclamation in *I promessi sposi*: “Carneade! Chi era costui?”. *Cinematografo cerebrale* includes several allusions to Manzoni’s novel.

From a yawn, to a musical note, to a voice, sound connects images apparently unrelated to one another. Yet the question about the socialists is the second psychological pivot around which a series of associated images are gathered. Thus, politics and sexuality combine at the very centre of the cinematic imagination of the petty bourgeois character who is described ironically by De Amicis.

The author's pioneering technique anticipates a number of cinematic solutions that would be developed by film directors in the following years. The language of film was gradually evolving from the elementary juxtaposition of separated, fixed and rather theatrical scenes to a fairly codified syntax based on more calculated cuts. However, the techniques of continuous editing had not really been introduced yet.¹³⁰ In consideration of such textual and contextual elements, it is plausible that De Amicis's writing could have been influenced by the new visual means and by the alternation of shots that he may have first experienced at certain cinema theatres during his stay in Paris and then in Turin.¹³¹ He wrote his short story with explicit reference to the new medium, not only by mentioning it in the title, but also by including some passages that roughly replicate the basic cinematic techniques of that time. He also pushed himself to explore some possible stylistic solutions that were yet to come, but already recognisable *in nuce*, in cinema. Thus, De Amicis seems to have followed Giovanni Papini's (1907) witty suggestion to his fellow citizens, and particularly the "uomini gravi e sapienti", to try the kinematographs, for they are "oggetto degno di riflessione" with a fascinating power,

¹³⁰ The shot/reverse shot pattern, for example, "came into frequent use by the mid-1910s" (Abel, 2005: 130).

¹³¹ We know that very early screenings of films took place in all major Italian towns. Turin was one of the leading centres where the new spectacle from France was soon imported. In 1905, the 'Società generale italiana Il Cinematografo' was born and Turin boasted ten cinema theatres. In 1908, Giovanni Pastrone founded its 'Itala Film' and by the time the First World War broke out, Turin had become one of the most important places of the cinema industry (cf. Bernardini, 1981; Brunetta, 2007: 25-40; Cherchi Usai, 1986). The cinema similarly broke through in other cities, such as Florence, as Papini (1907) reports: "Nella sola città di cui sappia il numero preciso, in Firenze, ve ne sono già dodici, vale a dire uno per ogni diciottomila abitanti."

able to suggest new and unpredictable fantasies: “Il cinematografo è, per questo, un aiuto allo sviluppo della immaginazione; una specie di oppio senza cattive conseguenze; una realizzazione visiva delle fantasie più inverosimili”. It seems that De Amicis had attempted to translate into words what, in Papini’s terms, was “una breve fantasmagoria di venti minuti”, and had directly exploited the cinematic visualisation as a blueprint to render the phantasmagoric imagination of his character.¹³² Thanks to its photographic tricks, at the cinema “si possono ottenere delle pellicole dove accadono le cose più inverosimili e straordinarie” (Papini 1907). Similarly, the mental associations of the problematic early twentieth-century individual can be put on the page more effectively, since having a cinematic imagination means for De Amicis’s character “fare spettacolo della propria mente a sé medesima” (De Amicis, 1996: 589). In a significant analogy with the split subjectivity that Freud was describing in his works, the bourgeois character of *Cinematografo cerebrale* begins to wonder about his own identity.¹³³ When he grabs a book to stop his ‘madness’, the man visualises “fra riga e riga” unrelated scenes and objects:

Arrivato in fondo alla pagina, non si ricordò di nulla di quanto aveva letto: eppure aveva letto. Ma lui proprio? O un altro, misterioso, che aveva fatto le sue veci? Siamo due in uno, dunque? E chi è l’altro? E io...? Chi sono? Gli parve in quel momento di essere sconosciuto a sé stesso”. (41)

¹³² See Terry Castle (1988: 27-9), who recalls the original technical meaning of the term ‘phantasmagoria’, that is “the so-called ghost-shows of late eighteenth-century and early nineteenth-century Europe – illusionistic exhibitions and public entertainments in which ‘spectres’ were produced with the use of a magic lantern”. The term came to refer to subjectivity and the phantasmic imagery of the mind only some decades later. Papini used the term in this latter sense, thereby linking an older concept with the new cinematographic spectacle.

¹³³ Baldissone stresses that some passages seem to confirm De Amicis’s knowledge of Freud. This short story is said to be “un capolavoro parafreudiano di analisi psicologica, con procedimenti quali l’associazione d’idee, l’autoproiezione, il senso di colpa e la relativa repressione”. She points out that with *Cinematografo cerebrale* De Amicis offers “una lettura socialista della psicologia borghese” (De Amicis, 1996: 1192-3). See also Maggitti (2007: 29-45) on these points.

The theme of the doppelgänger (already typical of European decadentism and of writers such as Dostoevsky, or, later, Pirandello), is associated with self-analysis. Not surprisingly, the cinema is thematised as a dangerous and potentially perverting means, for the mental imagery is ultimately treated as a “peccato della meditazione”, as “un’orgia dello spirito” of which the man is even ashamed (“un poco si vergognava”, 600). Several previous passages, on the other hand, had already moralistically thematised the bourgeois code of behaviour: “Ridiventava fanciullo? Si vergognò”; “Non era dunque un galantuomo?” (594). Although comparatively underdeveloped, the technique of interior monologue is evident in these rhetorical questions and counterpoints the “mille immaginazioni scellerate, turpi, mostruose” (594) that unravel like ghosts before the character’s eyes, as if a cinematic flow of images:

Che cos’era quindi la spontaneità del pensiero? Che cosa la volontà? E che era lui se non una macchina pensante, che si moveva secondo che i suoi congegni volevano, e di cui non era che spettatore? (592)

And yet, on a discursive level and going deeper in the text analytically, it is possible to observe how this is entirely composed following a strict internal focalisation (the reader knows what the character knows) and a strict internal ocularisation (the reader sees what the character sees or claims to see). These techniques were not yet used in the cinema of that time, which so heavily relied on a theatrical externalisation of the stories. Only a few passages break up this convention, and these are the few moments where it is possible to perceive relatively para-cinematic writing, because the objectification of the thinking character (i.e. zero ocularisation) is necessary for the cinematic immersion. In these moments, the reader is drawn for a second *into* the fictional place as an invisible presence. Ultimately, much of the story here is recounted non-cinematically; the narrative discourse is conceived as literary *tout court*. This is a *literary* account of a thinking mind, and the cinema is only used as a metaphor for full-cerebral imagination. This style and use of the cinematic metaphor, which will reappear

seventy years later in, for example, Elsa Morante's *Aracoeli*, is substantially different from a *para-cinematic* account of the storyworld, or of the unconscious of a non-self-reflective mind, as observable in some passages of Joyce's *Ulysses*. Therefore, whereas in *Cinematografo cerebrale* De Amicis seemingly attempts to imitate the film form, he more properly only thematises the cinema as a new fact of the modern life, and cleverly evokes some of its formal procedures to render the character's thoughts, without the text taking the shape of the film form (neither the seminal film form of the early cinema nor, evidently, those of later, more sophisticated films). Finally, the foreground effect, brought about by the abundant verbs in the *passato remoto* and the recurrent verb 'vedere', is frustrated by the overall narrative configuration and narrative contract that make this short story a false (*pseudo-*) cinema in words. Although it has yet to mature, the cinematic mode is nevertheless on the horizon.

4.3. Para-cinematic fiction: Luigi Pirandello, *Quaderni di Serafino Gubbio operatore*

Luigi Pirandello (1867-1936) is certainly one of the key cultural figures of the early twentieth century.¹³⁴ In his *Quaderni di Serafino Gubbio operatore* (1925),¹³⁵ some important traces of the cinematic mode are found, despite the fact that the narrative configuration of the novel is mostly not cinematic.¹³⁶ The ambiguous and layered structure of the book has been linked to several genres, such as the essay or philosophical novel (Luperini, 1999: 74), and the ‘film novel’ with a fairly cinematic style (Moses 1995). The multifaceted aspects of the narrative and the specific subject of the cinema have brought critics to contrasting stances, especially regarding the ‘filmic’ element of the narration. As will be clear below, the concept of cinematic mode that I expound proves all the more clarifying when applied to similar controversial instances.

¹³⁴ The bibliography on Pirandello is so extensive that I will only limit myself to mention some important and fairly recent works in Italy (Guglielminetti, 2006; Luperini, 1999) and in the Anglo-American context (Bloom 1989; Biasin and Gieri 1999; Hallamore Caesar 1998), and more specifically on his activity as a novelist (Ganeri 2001; Baldi 2006; Grignani 1993; Pullini 1997), and the connection with the cinema (Moses 1995; Verdone 1997; Raffaeli 1993; Càllari 1991; Davinci Nichols and O’Keefe Bazzoni 1995; Syrimis 2012).

¹³⁵ All quotations refer to the ‘Meridiani’ edition (Pirandello 1994).

¹³⁶ The novel was first conceived with the title *Filàuri* in 1903, elaborated from 1913 to 1915 and proposed for the journal ‘La Lettura’ with the title *La tigre*, but published with the title *Si gira...* between June to August 1915 in the journal ‘Nuova Antologia’ in seven instalments, each of which was titled *Fascicolo delle Note di Serafino Gubbio operatore*. With the modified label of *quaderni*, these seven episodes would form the book format released by publisher Treves in 1916 with the same title *Si gira...* The novel gained its final title *Quaderni di Serafino Gubbio operatore* for the definitive 1925 Bemporad edition, where minor textual changes are also observable. See the author’s letters (Pirandello 1980), as well as Càllari (1991: 18-24) and Raffaeli (1993: 31-40) for a thorough reconstruction of the novel’s creation. The book’s success has consistently changed over the years: while in the past *Quaderni* was relegated to a marginal position, many critics acknowledge now that the novel is, if probably not the most important one, at least the most complex and difficult in Pirandello’s production. See Corrado Donati (1998) for a history of the critics’ consensus on Pirandello.

The novel is narrated in the first person by homodiegetic character Serafino Gubbio, who is a cameraman at the film company ‘Kosmograph’ in Rome.¹³⁷ In open contrast with the futurists’ claims, by means of this filter character, Pirandello notably describes cinema as the emblem of an increasingly mechanised world that alienates man and leads to ruin.¹³⁸ The cinema industry is populated by petty individuals and fosters shallow aspirations; genuine creativity is frustrated or eschewed for mere lucrative goals, so that art becomes impossible while its ‘aura’ (cf. Benjamin 1970) definitively vanishes;¹³⁹ actors are deprived of their corporeality and contact with live audience and perform a “lavoro stupido e muto” (585); life is reified and degenerates to the mere materiality of things. The protagonist, Serafino, is reified above all, being reduced, as are many others, to a ‘hand that turns a handle’. Because of his job as a cameraman, Gubbio has also trained himself for impassivity (“Oh, mi stimano tutti, qua, un ottimo operatore: vigile, preciso e d’una *perfetta impassibilità*”, 549), and in daily life limits himself to recording what he witnesses just as he does when he is behind the camera, the voracious ‘spider on its knock-kneed tripod’ which needs to be constantly ‘fed’ with the silliest fiction (“il trionfo della stupidità”, 523). Gubbio is synecdochically reduced to a hand and an eye, which equate to the handle and lens of the camera he manoeuvres; he has become progressively aware of his subordinate and depersonalised role, so much so as to feel

¹³⁷ The name Kosmograph alludes to ‘writing the cosmos’, which is one of the possibilities allowed by the powerful means of the cinema, and this takes on an ironic function in this novel. Raffaelli (1993: 38) points out that the French film company Cosmograph was briefly active in Rome in 1905 and then in 1914.

¹³⁸ Most critics agree in seeing narrator Gubbio as a filter for Pirandello’s opinions. Other critics, and particularly Gavriel Moses (1995), point to the novel’s ambivalence and tend to attribute Gubbio’s stances against the cinema to him alone as a fictional narrator with his own worldview.

¹³⁹ On Pirandello and Benjamin, see also Borsellino (1991: 213-4), who points out: “Benjamin guardava al futuro, ai mezzi offerti dalla tecnica per realizzare forme inattuabili in età pre-industriale. Pirandello era al contrario incline a scorgere nella tecnica il tecnicismo, nella macchina il macchinismo, gli strumenti insomma di un’inautenticità ripetitiva”.

nothing more than a silent object. He has developed a bitter philosophy of life as a consequence of the events he is about to tell.

Based on the notebook form, the narrative unfolds by intermingling the narrator's present brooding over his own condition in the age of mechanisation with his experience of the tragedy that is brewing at the Kosmograph's studios.¹⁴⁰ I must recall the complex plot of the novel for clarity's sake. In Notebook One, Gubbio exposes the philosophical issue related to the "congegno esterno" (519), that is "questo fragoroso e vertiginoso meccanismo della vita, che di giorno in giorno più si complica e s'accèlera" (520), and introduces the reader to a recent episode that occurred in a hospice for beggars in Rome (in all respects a Dostoevskian 'underground'), where he met his eccentric friend-philosopher Simone Pau and an alcoholic violinist who has gone mad.¹⁴¹ At the dosshouse, Gubbio also met his old friend Cocò Polacco, who now works in the cinema, and Russian vamp actress Varia Nestoroff, who came along to act in a scene to be shot in that rundown place. The vision of the woman triggered other memories, which he describes at the beginning of Notebook Two, through a very marked analepsis (i.e., he writes about what he had remembered at the dosshouse): this is the

¹⁴⁰ A prime example of the polemical stance against the mechanical 'harassment' is in the following passage, which is also an instance of evocation of the cinematic stream: "Si va, si vola. [...] Fuori, è un balenìo continuo, uno sbarbàglie incessante: tutto guizza e scompare. [...] C'è una molestia, però, che non passa. La sentite? Un calabrone che ronza sempre, cupo, fosco, brusco, sotto sotto, sempre. Che è? Il ronzìo dei pali telegrafici? lo striscìo continuo della carrucola lungo il filo dei tram elettrici? il fremito incalzante di tante macchine, vicine, lontane? quello del motore dell'automobile? quello dell'apparecchio cinematografico?" (524). The danger implied in technological progress is also alluded to in Cesarino's discourse about the advances in the techniques of illumination (oil, paraffin wax, gas, electricity) and in Pau's dispute with Senator Zeme, who is said to be a slave of his telescope (just as Gubbio is a slave of the camera).

¹⁴¹ The violinist's personal story is paradigmatic of Gubbio's: Simone Pau recounts that the violinist had been shocked twice by the mechanisation of life and the alienation from labour, first while in a typography (where he was shown "una macchina nuova: un pachiderma piatto, nero, basso; una bestiaccia mostruosa, che mangia piombo e caca libri [...] una *monotype* perfezionata", 535) and then in the cinema industry (where he, the great artist, was asked to provide accompaniment to an automatic piano that is 'fed' by "un rotolo di carta traforata introdotto nella pancia", 536). The man went crazy, refused both jobs, secluded himself in the dormitory, and even stopped playing his violin. As has been noted (Baldi, 2006: 133; Bárberi Squarotti, 2001: 89-102; Ganeri, 2001: 163), the violinist mirrors and anticipates Gubbio's estrangement and reaction.

sfumato paragraph devoted to the idyllic ‘Casa dei Nonni’, where he, as a poor student, used to act as a tutor to young Giorgio Mirelli. Giorgio would become a painter in Naples, while his sister Duccella would fall in love with friend Aldo Nuti. Whilst in Sorrento, Giorgio was acquainted and fell in love with Nestoroff, who had recently arrived in Italy. Gubbio describes her as a tiger because of her reddish hair and catlike bearing.¹⁴² Giorgio brought Nestoroff to his grandparents’ house, despite Nuti’s warning, and his friend decided to seduce the woman to provide Giorgio with proof of her shallowness. Nuti would be seduced instead, and Giorgio would commit suicide because of this double betrayal. By the time Gubbio is writing, Nestoroff has acted as a *femme fatale* in several films and gained a reputation as a man-eater on and off the big screen. Gubbio will be subtly attracted by Nestoroff, who is later said to be a troubled and unresolved person with masochistic impulses, so much so as to punish herself through an affair with the rude and boisterous actor Carlo Ferro.

The narrative contract of the novel is therefore clearly established by a writer-narrator (the ‘narrating-I’) who recounts and speculates on the rather trivial and pathetic events in which he himself has been and will be involved (the ‘experiencing-I’). The real action of the novel begins in Notebook Three, where the present tense, previously used with a straightforward ‘commentative’ function, is also occasionally deployed for narrative purposes, with the effect of foregrounding the actions and situations that Gubbio reports in his notebooks. He introduces the Kosmograph’s environs and facilities (road, buildings, courtyards, restaurants, and some departments) where he has found a job thanks to his friend Polacco. The reader understands that a film featuring a tiger is being produced and that the animal will be killed in

¹⁴² The association between woman and tiger is key in this novel but recurrent in literature. Examples are the character of Lorraine in Balzac’s *La Cousine Bette* (1846) and that of Nata in Verga’s *Tigre reale* (1875). Guido Baldi (2006: 146) points to the many clichés with which her figure is constructed and connected with some of D’Annunzio’s women, as well as with certain imaginative ideas about Slavs, also exploited in films at that time.

the final scene. This ‘snuff movie’ is repeatedly touched upon, and the tiger’s cage is the ‘black hole’ towards which the narrative gravitates throughout, as Margherita Ganeri puts it (2001: 171). In fact, in the middle of the novel, Gubbio and Nestoroff have a brief dialogue outside the beast’s cage; Simone Pau turns up with the violinist, who masterfully plays in front of the tiger after a long period of inactivity.

The narrative events increasingly approximate to the ambiguous ‘now’ of the story from which the *discours* originates. In Notebook Four, Gubbio shoots a minor scene of the tiger film in which Nestoroff performs a frenzied suicidal dance; the woman’s gaze is so impertinently pointed to the camera/man that Gubbio’s impassivity is almost compromised (“mi sono sentito vagellar gli occhi e intorbidare la vista”, 598). New characters are introduced when young Luisetta Cavalena turns up at the Kosmograph with her father, a would-be screenwriter with an unbearable and paranoid wife. Luisetta is a naïve and innocent beauty, and is immediately offered a part in a new film, a fact that triggers her mother’s fury. From Gubbio’s account, the reader understands that the narrator is attracted by her. In Notebook Five, Aldo Nuti suddenly goes to the studios in search of Nestoroff. Nuti immediately appears distressed, so that Polacco curtly asks Gubbio to rent one of Cavalena’s apartments and live with Nuti for a while. Once in Cavalena’s flat, Luisetta takes a fancy to Nuti, who in turn mistakes her for his former girlfriend Duccella while feverish. In Notebook Six, Gubbio is invited to Nestoroff’s house; here he is astonished by her figure on six canvases Giorgio had painted for her. Seeing as Luisetta continues to trick Nuti, Gubbio, who repeatedly acts as the peacemaker, travels to Sorrento to find Duccella. Gubbio hopes Nuti will finally give up on Nestoroff as soon as he sees Duccella again (and Luisetta, in turn, will finally turn her attention to him, Gubbio). Yet, the narrator discovers both Duccella and Nonna Rosa in misery, *horribile visu*, and hurriedly comes back to Rome, appalled. This event, which is placed in perfect structural symmetry with the ‘Casa dei Nonni’ remembrance, is key and preludes the final denouement: the past is gone forever, there is no more point of reference, the old

private world is shattered, and crumbles to pieces in the final episode. Notebook Seven concludes the narrative with the tragic scene that has been alluded to since the beginning (“ci sarà un dramma qui?”, 691). Carlo Ferro passes his part as the hunter that will kill the tiger in the film on to Nuti, but Nuti, at the crucial moment, purposefully aims to the side and shoots down Nestoroff outside the cage. The tiger mauls Nuti to death, while impassive Gubbio at the back records the entire scene. Because of the shock he has now become speechless and has assumed a final mask of impassivity toward the world, refusing all relationships, Luisetta included. He disparagingly comments:

La vita, che questa macchina s’è divorata, era naturalmente quale poteva essere in un tempo come questo, tempo di macchine; riproduzione stupida da un canto, pazza dall’altro, per forza, e quella più e questa un po’ meno bollate da un marchio di volgarità. Io mi salvo, io solo, nel mio silenzio, col mio silenzio, che m’ha reso così – come il tempo vuole – perfetto. (734)

The narrator organises his narrative and philosophical account from ambiguous and fluctuating perspectives *a posteriori*, sometimes from a considerable distance, sometimes closer to the events, giving free rein to his fairly learned vein (he is a frustrated intellectual and has cultivated “il baco in corpo della filosofia”, 548).¹⁴³ However, far from unfolding as a regular chronicle, Gubbio’s narrative is structured by a calculated net of internal references, where the frequent embedding of analepses or allusions to future consequences enacts rather marked internal references; additionally, the numerous digressions of the narrator stand out from the beginning, so that in any given passage, it is rather difficult to understand exactly from which temporal and conceptual perspective Gubbio is writing. The reader is frequently disoriented and only later understands the narrator is concluding his notes “dopo circa un mese dal fatto

¹⁴³ On Gubbio’s condition as a petty bourgeois and frustrated intellectual, see Roberto Alonge (1977: 172-84).

atrocissimo” (729), still shocked because of the horrific resolution of the human tensions that took place before his eyes.

The intricate, artificial, frayed plot of the novel is “poco più di un pretesto o di un *exemplum* per una riflessione che la travalica e che in realtà ha per oggetto il predominio delle macchine”, as Romano Luperini points out (1999: 71). I agree in part, because I do not think the whole story is so pre textual and marginal.¹⁴⁴ On the other hand, *Quaderni* has lent itself to a range of disparate and even contrasting interpretations I will not investigate here for reasons of space. In regard to the cinematic mode, which is the pivot of my discourse here, the fragmentation in seven *quaderni* and shorter numbered sections has been considered by some critics as a mirroring of cinematic montage. Alessandro Vettori (1998: 90-2) claims that Gubbio “transfers the professional skills he has acquired as cameraman into his writing activity. [...] He uses the pen in the same way he uses the camera”, and his account is constructed by “a true operation of montage”. This interpretation seems untenable. On the contrary, despite Gubbio’s non-linear account of the events, it seems that a translation or imitation of the film form is not actually enacted, as other critics have remarked, or is enacted only sporadically.¹⁴⁵ However, I believe that a more balanced position is likely to do justice to the influence of cinema and the remediation of the film form in the novel’s structures. This remediation appears quite limited but is nonetheless perceivable; it is non-structural and yet very telling.

¹⁴⁴ Note, however, that Pirandello himself claimed so in 1914: “il *fattaccio* [...] era per me soltanto un pretesto” (Càllari, 1991: 21; Pirandello, 1980).

¹⁴⁵ See Ganeri (2001: 183): “Contrariamente a quanto hanno pensato in molti, in realtà, nel romanzo non sussiste un’emulazione delle tecniche filmiche”; and Grignani (1993: 65-6): “La tentazione di abbozzare serie corpose di equivalenze romanzo-film è a mio parere illusoria, poiché nel complesso l’atteggiamento enunciativo di questo romanzo saggio non ha a che vedere con la presentificazione della sceneggiatura, strutturalmente funzionale al ‘voler vedere’ il film che sarà; le sue analessi sono molto dissimili dalla tecnica del *flash-back*; le transizioni repentine da un *micro-récit* all’altro sono al servizio dell’argomentare di chi narra e assomigliano ben poco agli stacchi tra sequenze del film, retti da una sintassi narrativo-iconica diversa.”

First, if one considers the philosophy that emerges from the book, as well as Pirandello's marginal involvement in the cinema industry and his relative aversion for film by the time the novel was published, it appears highly unlikely that the author had attempted an imitation of the film form through his own writing.¹⁴⁶ The author's stance toward the cinema changed over time, moving from stark opposition to a certain openness and enthusiasm. However, *Quaderni* unquestionably belongs to a period when the author could not accept the film form as a source of inspiration for shaping the narrative form of his own fiction.¹⁴⁷ Considering the temporal span from 1903 to 1925 in which *Quaderni* was reworked, cinema was gradually overturning the idea as a cheap form of entertainment and gaining the status of an art. In *Quaderni*, the voracious *bêtise* of filmmaking is only a pretext to treating the real issues characterising modern life that trouble Gubbio and, probably, Pirandello. The film industry is taken on as a paradigm of the incoming age of machines, where mankind's humanity is at

¹⁴⁶ In *Soggettivismo e oggettivismo nell'arte narrativa* (1908) Pirandello took a stance against the technique of naturalism claiming that “i mezzi d’arte non possono concepirsi come esteriori. La tecnica è il movimento spontaneo e immediato della forma, e chi imita una tecnica, imita inevitabilmente una forma” (Pirandello, 2006: 699); hence, he referred to the cinema as a bad example of imitation of nature, and as a medium with naturalist characteristics: “[L’arte] non consiste, né può consistere nell’imitar senz’altro, tal quale, la natura, nel riprodurre la realtà materiale, dei suoni, dei gesti, come farebbe un fonografo o un cinematografo” (708).

¹⁴⁷ The relationship over the years between Pirandello and the cinema is documented in Càllari's extraordinarily accurate and rich book (1991: 17-111). Pirandello had contacts with the cinema industry since 1911 and tried, driven in part by his poor finances, to sell stories and screenplays in 1913-14. In 1916, he accepted the role as a literary advisor for Tespi Film. In 1918, the first adaptation of one of his works, *Il lume dell’altra casa*, was produced. Pirandello then maintained regular contact with filmmakers and producers while his fame grew and adaptations multiplied (the most important of which was Marcel L’Herbier’s *Feu Mathias Pascal* in 1926). In relation to Pirandello’s ideas of the medium, Barnes (1997: 193) distinguishes between “il cinema *come esisteva* (meccanico, mimetico) – che provocò in Pirandello una reazione sostanzialmente e costantemente negativa – e il cinema *come avrebbe potuto essere* (creativo, fantastico) – per il quale Pirandello dimostrò non poco entusiasmo”. Some years later, in fact, he would be enthusiastic about cinematic language and pointed to some new aesthetic and artistic possibilities with his concept of *cinemelografia*. See Pirandello’s stances in Càllari (1991: 118-28). In a way, a prime example of *cinemelografia* would be Walt Disney’s 1940 *Fantasia*. Pirandello first ideas against the cinema are not dissimilar to those of many modernist American and British writers who faulted some films for their triviality, but looked to the new medium as a powerful source of inspiration with great possibilities to create valuable artworks in the future (cf. Shail 2012b: 2). Fabio Andreazza (2008: 89) also points out that Pirandello’s first stances aimed to highlight his opposition to D’Annunzio’s and Marinetti’s ideas of modernity, art and lifestyle.

stake (“Vi resta ancora, o signori, un po’ d’anima, un po’ di cuore e di mente?”, 523). In the commercial nature of cinema, Pirandello observed the *Zeitgeist* as irredeemably spoiled by the inauthenticity of human relationships (“Che uomini, che intrecci, che passioni, che vita in un tempo come questo? La follia, il delitto, o la stupidità. Vita da cinematografo!”, 690; also note that most characters are distraught and carry on a painful and grotesque life).¹⁴⁸ Discursively, Gubbio seems to be mainly concerned with this, he focuses much of his philosophical vein on this.

Pirandello’s theorisation on humour in *L’umorismo* (1908), therefore, proves crucial: the novel indirectly refers to the essay (see the reference to the animal lack of awareness, or the revolution of the telescope, as well as some existential questions). Some passages in the essay foreshadow Gubbio’s experience and humorous approach to life:

Tutte le finzioni dell’anima, tutte le creazioni del sentimento vedremo esser materia dell’umorismo, vedremo cioè la riflessione diventar come un demonietto che smonta il congegno dell’immagine, d’ogni fantasma messo su dal sentimento; smontarlo per veder com’è fatto; scaricarne la molla, e tutto il congegno striderne, convulso. (2006: 922)

In these lines that by no means refer to the cinema, the figurative repertory and vocabulary are notable: Pirandello, in his essay, points to “finzioni”, a “congegno dell’immagine”, a “fantasma” (etymologically: apparition, image) to be disassembled and dismantled (“smontarlo”); similar terms and issues reappear in *Quaderni* in terms of “stupida finzione” (538; 576), “congegno esterno della vita” (519), “macchinetta stridula” and “gioco d’illusione su uno squallido pezzo di tela” (586). Pirandello recalls the spectacle of those individuals who

¹⁴⁸ This generalised inauthenticity is balanced by the authenticity of the tiger, which ‘devours life’ because of its natural animalness: quite a difference compared to the ‘stupid fiction’ that constitutes the daily food for the camera-spider. Also note Gubbio’s claim: “Nessuna bestia m’ha parlato come questa tigre” (574). Additionally, Pau and the violinist authenticity is of note: their (only alluded) nudity at the dosshouse’s shower room is quite indicative indeed (cf. Angelini, 1990: 27; Baldi, 2006: 144-5; Bárberi Squarotti, 2001: 104-6).

“a mezzo d’una qualche faccenda, fra il tumulto della vita, traboccano giù, fulminati”, because their internal ‘mechanism’ is broken “dopo tanto fragore e tanta vertigine” (520). The cinema is the most revealing product of vulgar times that indirectly sheds light on key existential issues. Gubbio’s speechlessness at the end parodically mirrors the silent recording of scenes, as well as the speechless moving images of early films: his own mechanism is ‘broken’.

Regarding the medium of film, through Gubbio Pirandello criticises the photographic reproduction of reality and human figures because it breaks the continuum of life “in pezzetti e bocconcini, tutti d’uno stampo, stupidi e precisi”. The film image creates a product (“le scatolette della nostra vita”, 523) that unnaturally resists the changes of time and does not represent reality in its entirety. As Gavriel Moses (1995: 9) points out, “Pirandello thus perceives the inherently metonymic structure of film syntax and plumbs it in its existential dimension”. In this novel, the isolation and deformation of human traits, which are so typical of his fiction, take on further implications. The subjects are unsettled because they are unable to recognise themselves on the screen, especially in close-ups, as both Nestoroff and Nuti confess.¹⁴⁹ *Quaderni* therefore connects the typical Pirandellian themes of the double and the character’s mask from his early production to the latter, the first edition also being positioned immediately before the author’s theatrical period. The core themes of *Sei personaggi in cerca d’autore* (1921) and *Uno, nessuno e centomila* (1925) are also clearly anticipated in Serafino

¹⁴⁹ Cf. about Nestoroff: “Resta ella sbalordita e quasi atterrita delle apparizioni della propria immagine su lo schermo, così alterata e scomposta. Vede lì una, che è lei, ma che ella non conosce” (557); and about Nuti: “Si possono contare i peli delle ciglia. Non mi pareva l’ora che sparisce dallo schermo. [...] È curioso l’effetto che ci fa la nostra immagine riprodotta fotograficamente, anche in un semplice ritratto, quando ci facciamo a guardarla per la prima volta. Perché? ‘Forse – gli risposi – perché ci sentiamo lì fissati in un momento, che già non è più in noi; che resterà, e che si farà man mano sempre più lontano’” (724).

Gubbio.¹⁵⁰ The moving image and its industry take on a humorous function because they reveal a ‘reality living beyond the reach of human vision’ (cf. Pirandello, 2006: 939).¹⁵¹ Thus, Pirandello’s insight also seems to share some points with the avantgardes of the 1920s (e.g., Dziga Vertov’s ‘kino-eye’ and his approach to ‘life caught unawares’) and seems to foreshadow new cinematic approaches in the 1940s (e.g. Cesare Zavattini’s theory of *pedinamento*) and the French poetics *du regard* in the 1960s.¹⁵² As Gubbio claims in the novel, “C’è un *oltre* in tutto. Voi non volete e non sapete vederlo” (519); the cinema may preserve its value as a documentary medium that reveals the ‘beyond’, the ‘invisible’ behind the surface of things without interfering with them. However, Gubbio’s documentary ability peaks when the fiction of film turns into real death (“come operatore, io sono ora, veramente, perfetto” 579): total camera-like objectivity records the final outcome of a ridiculous reality that will only raise morbid curiosity in the audience and yield a huge amount of money for the film company. Therefore, the book shows that the naturalist impassive description of life is impossible, especially when life itself turns out to be fiction. Gubbio’s final speechlessness also points to the silence of the naturalist writer.

As a matter of fact, however, Gubbio’s impassivity is only stated from his point of view. As Maria Antonietta Grignani (1993) points out, in fact, “la parola *impassibilità*, una delle più ricorrenti nel lessico del protagonista narratore, non traggia in inganno: siamo nel 1915, in un

¹⁵⁰ Debenedetti (1971: 276) discussed the connection between the ‘novel to be done’ and the ‘drama to be done’. Mario Verdone (1997) points out that the idea of the ‘theatre in the theatre’ is anticipated with the ‘cinema in the cinema’ of *Quaderni*. Renato Barilli (2003: 202) explains that *Quaderni* anticipates the theme of mirroring: “Si verifica una palinodia, per cui il cinema, proprio per l’apparente impassibilità che sembra caratterizzarlo, può divenire un forte strumento ‘straniante’. [...] La pellicola serve come uno specchio prolungato che ci obbliga a ‘vederci’ nei nostri panni quotidiani, e quindi a scoprirci ridicoli, simili a fantocci recitanti”.

¹⁵¹ See also Guido Aristarco (1985: 48) and Gavriel Moses (1995: 23) on this point.

¹⁵² On these points see Barilli (2003: 202-4); Baldi (2006: 150); Davinci Nichols and O’Keefe Bazzoni (1995: 12). See Jeremy Hicks (2007: 22-38) for a discussion of the concept of ‘life caught unawares’. Regarding Zavattini and his role in Italian Neorealism, see Peter Bondanella (2002) and Christopher Wagstaff (2007: 78-9).

momento in cui la perdita di fiducia nell'impossibilità ontologica tipica del naturalismo è per Pirandello un dato acquisito.” The great metaphor of filmic impassive recording is exploited in order to completely contrast aesthetic outcomes linked with the impersonality championed by naturalists and is in fact functional to concealing the internal dynamics of Gubbio, who is actually far from being unperturbed *both* during his experience of the events *and* whilst he writes his account. Hence, the novel is organised by two narrative threads: that of the characters’ actions, loves and deaths, and that of Gubbio’s individual evolution (which particularly emerges in Notebook Five). In narratological terms, there is a three-fold tension between Gubbio’s witnessing-and-recounting of the events from his later perspective, and his declaring himself impassive. This tension accounts for a dynamic between a narrator who is part of the storyworld but recounts the story *of the others* impassively (intradiegetic-heterodiegetic narrator), and a narrator who cannot constitutively cancel his own involvement *both in the story and the discourse* that refers it, and inevitably ends up talking about *himself* (intradiegetic-homodiegetic narrator). Therefore, it does not seem that “in his written work Serafino functions as the camera-lens, a static eye contemplating life around him”, as Vettori (1998: 91) claims. Rather, Gubbio’s telling seems to be driven by “la fiaccola accesa del sentimento” and mitigated by “l’acqua diaccia della riflessione”, as Pirandello additionally put it in *L’umorismo* (2006: 924). Ultimately, Pirandello’s humour pervades both the characters narrated by Gubbio, whose pathetic facade he humorously reveals; and Gubbio himself, who turns out to be an extreme, estranged figure of nihilism (“né mondo, né tempo, né nulla: io ero fuori di tutto, assente da me stesso e dalla vita”, 703; “il tempo è questo; la vita è questa”, 735).

In effect, Gubbio’s attitude and the narrative logic are manifested from the vigorous and serene *incipit* of the book:

Studio la gente nelle sue più ordinarie occupazioni, se mi riesca di scoprire negli altri quello che manca a me per ogni cosa ch'io faccia: la certezza che capiscano ciò che fanno (519).

The active form of the verb ('studio') and the subsequent anacoluthon ('se mi riesca') signal the narrator's intentional act of study and betray his uneasiness. This uneasiness, or restlessness, will be transparently rendered in the syntax throughout the novel, in contrast with the reiterated linearity and impersonality of camera recording. The asyndetic coordination additionally conveys the figure of speech of 'zeugma': "studio la gente [...] (studio) se mi riesca". The two-fold object of this 'study' (the people and, in short, himself), which shapes the structure of the entire narration, is expressed in the very first sentence of the book, but is regularly overlooked. Gubbio's *active* gaze, in fact, is soon masked, or better repressed, and only remains perceptible behind his guesswork about the personalities and hidden angles of the other characters. As he writes in another passage, he first 'studies' unnoticed by the others; if he looks people in the eye, they cloud over; and if he goes on to scrutinize them, they are disturbed and confused and get angry. Gubbio aims to find out through the other characters what he is lacking ("quello che manca a me") and betrays his own feeling of incompleteness. This calculated narrative contract is masterfully concealed and ambiguously sustained throughout the novel, so that the reader is trapped in the narrator's account without perceiving how partial and undermined by a substantial reticence this account actually is. Thus, the reader trusts in Gubbio's camera-eye fidelity, but is misleadingly led to forget what happens behind such a humanoid 'apparatus'. If there is a novel that especially requires repeated readings, *Quaderni* is it. The narrator will overturn his first approach in a later passage: "Porsi davanti la vita come oggetto di studio è assurdo [...] la vita non si spiega; si vive" (662). How surprising to note retrospectively that Gubbio exhibits clues of his biased inclination from the beginning. Gubbio's writing is also immediately connected with his need to vent the frustration of being a 'hand that turns a handle'; it is a sort of therapeutic writing:

Soddisfo, scrivendo, a un bisogno di sfogo, prepotente. Scarico la mia professionale impassibilità e mi vendico, anche; e con me vendico tanti, condannati come me a non essere altro che *una mano che gira una manovella*. (522-3)

This passage makes it clear that Gubbio ‘discharges’, ‘frees himself of’, his professional impassivity and gets pale satisfaction and a cold revenge by writing. This is the open negation of naturalist impassivity.¹⁵³ However, his vengeance is not performed by ‘unreeling’ the film of the events; Gubbio in fact recounts, explains, and comments what he, if anything, had previously ‘recorded’ with his typically affected posture of impassivity in real life. His account, therefore, cannot be assessed as impassive, nor can it be taken as filmic *tout court*, all the more so in consideration of the huge amount of linguistic marks of orality, interjections and metadiscursive allocutions he uses. Rather, as Ganeri (2001: 189) points out, Gubbio “tende da un lato al soliloquio e dall’altro al monologo teatrale”. The association between the narrator and the camera, albeit effectively expressed in the text, is ultimately to be rejected as merely superficial and inconsistent. In particular, dialogues are invariably intersected by Gubbio’s retrospective commentary, so that, after such meddling, any pretension of objectivity or impassivity must but be cast aside.

Gubbio has been forced to become impassive because his working experience frustrates his human self-awareness and leaves him alienated before a menacingly mechanised world (“Sono operatore. Ma [...] non opero nulla”, 521). However, in spite of his insistent focus on the erotic drama in which he is not allowed to take part, almost as if he were a spurious and contradictory element, his telling of the story betrays his own being at the core of the novel. As several critics, particularly Grignani (1993: 62), have pointed out, this is the ‘novel of the

¹⁵³ For Debenedetti (1971: 280), *Quaderni* exemplifies the modern structure of the novel in the making and marks an epochal shift: “il romanzo dei *Quaderni* diventa la parabola della fine del romanzo naturalista”. See also Giorgio Bärberi Squarotti (2001), who insists on Pirandello’s breakthrough.

narrator' who rather narcissistically and paradoxically exhibits himself continuously. For Nino Borsellino (1991: 217), the logic of the novel is clasped "nella morsa del narratore"; and for Giorgio Bärberi Squarotti (2001: 85), the cinema embodied by the cameraman becomes "la parodia della struttura naturalista dell'opera d'arte". Gubbio betrays his repressed personality in several passages, one of which is when he is scornfully teased by some actors addressing him by his nickname *Si gira*, an episode where the vexed narrator (in his writing, never factually) connects one of the several brief and bitter tirades of the book (that of the turtle carrying excrement on its shell).¹⁵⁴ Therefore, his impassivity more realistically appears as a self-defence or a manifestation of dumbness, and has to do with the feeling of being excluded (a key theme in Pirandello since his first novel *L'esclusa*), also because he belongs to a lower social class. For his friend Pau, in fact, Gubbio is an imbecile and man who is stuck.¹⁵⁵ *Quaderni* is a story of great reticence and ineptitude, and Gubbio is fundamentally an unreliable narrator of his own psychology – an interpretation Ganeri is convinced of as well (cf. 2001: 189). What is substantially trustworthy is his account of the external events, the pathetic and silly dramas he witnesses.¹⁵⁶ The structural complexity of this novel, thus, also lies in the calculated gap between the seeming centrality of the erotic triangles and tragic events that Gubbio recounts

¹⁵⁴ Doctor Cavalena is the other character who is given a nickname. He is "notissimo alla *Kosmograph* sotto il nomignolo di *Suicida*" (602) because of his screenplays that invariably end with suicides. Yet, his nickname perhaps alludes to his marital situation, too; and his rejected and meddlesome figure parallels and reverses, in a way, that of Serafino Gubbio, strengthening the many symmetries and reversals of the characters' traits in the novel. For other parallels and internal references about animals (tiger, spider, hornet, snipe, horse, turtle...) and the balance of power between humans and beasts, see Grignani (1993), and Franca Angelini (1990: 21), who speaks of "una topografia umana stravolta e invertita, in cui storia e natura si incontrano e si scambiano le parti" and points out that "gli antagonisti di Serafino sono tutti designati con metafore zoologiche" so that "il mondo intorno a lui è [...] un bestiario".

¹⁵⁵ "Capito il mio proposito, mi guardò negli occhi e, vedendomeli perfettamente impassibili, esclamò sorridendo: 'Come sei imbecille!'" (532); "Dunque tu sei prigioniero di quello che hai fatto, della forma che quel fatto ti ha dato" (611).

¹⁵⁶ Baldi (2006: 123-4) colourfully defines the events around Nestoroff "il drammone erotico-patetico-luttuoso" and points out how such a sub-plot is, at any rate, correlated with many film scripts in the 1910s. In relation to the other sub-plot, Barilli (2003: 201-2) talks of "condizione subumana" and "implacabile masochismo" in Gubbio, who is a "mostro di impaccio e goffaggine".

by virtue of his privileged position in the storyworld, and his fundamentally untold psychology that can only be read beneath the surface. To pick up the figurative association with the camera again, the lens peering at the external world – which is metonymically assumed by Gubbio for his actual being – impedes focus on the *operatore* in action behind the scenes, who can only be inferred elliptically; but the camera handle, which is necessary for recording, is paralleled by the hand that he uses to write, which redeems his own alienation.¹⁵⁷ Through such a remarkable construction, Pirandello transcends both the paradigm of detached ‘study’, typical of naturalism, and that of the traditional psychological narrative, re-shaping the twentieth-century novel under the aegis of de-structured subjectivity and a fragmentary gaze on the external world. Unexpectedly, the subject who is *off-screen* is at the logical centre of the novel. This subject is a gloomy individual with no bodily traits and scant background, who in the end appears dazed and confused, stripped as he is of his ‘superfluity’, paradoxically purified, all enclosed in his *silenzio di cosa* (607; 735).¹⁵⁸

Therefore, the philosophical and humorous traits of the novel clearly inform the entire narrative, and the cinematic medium exemplifies the essence of a contemporary world that is mediated by a new perception of time and communication. Gubbio is disgusted by the triviality of the fictional stories that are produced. He comments on the meetings,

¹⁵⁷ Ganeri (2001: 152) sees “un metaforico viaggio di purificazione intellettuale, tutta laica, dall’inciviltà della meccanizzazione e della mercificazione, in difesa della scrittura. Serafino si estranea, quasi in virtù di un’ascesi autistica, da un mondo alienato”. See also Bärberi Squarotti (2001) and Baldi (2006) on this point.

¹⁵⁸ Angelini (1990: 10) observes that “la mancanza di connotati di Serafino rappresenta il punto di arrivo di un lungo lavoro letterario applicato alla deformazione del viso umano, all’estrazione dei suoi elementi rivelatori, al loro isolamento, in un procedimento riduttivo dei connotati naturali che si conclude con l’adozione della maschera”. For this reason, too, *Quaderni* stands out as a crossroad work that preludes Pirandello’s theatrical season. Additionally, note that the protagonist’s name alludes to his being seraphic and his surname refers to the town that welcomed Saint Francis. Umberto Artioli (1989) has explored this connection further, but with dubious results (cf. Ganeri, 2001: 184-6; Guglielminetti, 2006: 166). Serafino’s attitude has more convincingly been related to the theme of indifference that was also circulating in the poetry of Camillo Sbarbaro and Eugenio Montale (Baldi, 2006: 159; Luperini, 1999: 75).

circumstances and dynamics involving producers, filmmakers and actors; however, regardless of his comments, these film-related activities are constantly kept at the margin of the human and erotic relationships he narrates. In significant passages, at any rate, Gubbio's account and depictions become effectively para-cinematic. The beginning of Notebook Three is often quoted as an example of early cinematisation of writing (cf. Moses, 1995: 8):

Un lieve sterzo. C'è una carrozzella che corre avanti. – Pò, pòpòò, pòòò.
Che? La tromba dell'automobile la tira indietro? Ma sì! Ecco pare che la faccia proprio andare indietro, comicamente.

Le tre signore dell'automobile ridono, si voltano, alzano le braccia a salutare con molta vivacità, tra un confuso e gajo svolazzò di veli variopinti; e la povera carrozzella, avvolta in una nuvola alida, nauseante, di fumo e di polvere, per quanto il cavalluccio sfiancato si sforzi di tirarla col suo trotterello stracco, seguita a dare indietro, indietro, con le case, gli alberi, i rari passanti, finché non scompare in fondo al lungo viale fuor di porta. Scompare? No: che! È scomparsa l'automobile. La carrozzella, invece, eccola qua, che va avanti ancora, pian piano, col trotterello stracco, uguale, del suo cavalluccio sfiancato. E tutto il viale par che rivenga avanti, pian piano con essa. [...] Nella carrozzella ci sono io. (566)

The present tense, which was already used for commentary purposes in the previous paragraphs, is deployed here to narrate and it supports a peculiar cinematic style. Gubbio describes the Doppler effect produced by the clacson of a running car that overtakes a small horse-drawn carriage. As Jost would put it, the auricularisation here is effectively 'anchored' to the internal ocularisation of the character. But there is more than that. Gubbio's account of the scene immediately includes external points of view and translates the cinematic continuity editing: the perspective of the scene is first given by a sort of camera-car;¹⁵⁹ a subsequent shot from behind the running car frames the carriage as it becomes smaller at a distance; a reverse shot on the ladies conveys Gubbio's point of view, followed by another perspective from the car; then an ambiguously objective and arguably closer, frontal ocularisation of the carriage

¹⁵⁹ Cinematic experiments that included positioning the camera on moving transport were attempted in early films at least since 1906 (Gunning, 2005: 92; Brunetta, 1972: 8-10; Moses, 1995: 277).

(“eccola qua, che va avanti ancora, piano piano”) brings the visualisation to a fixed perspective again (“e tutto il viale par che rivenga avanti”), revealing that Gubbio is sitting there. The narrator subsequently dwells upon the avenue and the horse in his usual non-cinematic manner, and adds some existential considerations, clearly contrasting with the futurists’ contemporary glorification of the car. The paragraph ends with his exclamation (“Ecco, a destra... volta a destra! La *Kosmograph* è qua, in questa traversa remota, fuor di porta”, 567), where the present tense combines with deictics for an effective para-cinematic style. A proper POV shot seems imitated and verbalised at the beginning of the following paragraph, where the Kosmograph’s buildings are described. The reader is immersed in the storyworld with Gubbio, while the buildings facilities are presented with profuse deictics: “l’entrata è a sinistra”; “dirimpetto è un’osteria”; the chaffeurs are described “là in fondo, ove la traversa è chiusa da una siepe di stecchi e spuntoni” (568-9). The turtle parable intersects with the ‘live’ account according to a narrative-and-commentative pattern that will shape the rest of the book.

In paragraph 3, the narrator aims to immerse the reader again in the storyworld before offering his philosophical account of the situation. We follow Gubbio, now transformed into a camera: “Entro nel vestibolo a sinistra, e riesco nella rampa del cancello, ingleajata e incassata fra i fabbricati del secondo reparto, il *Reparto Fotografico o del Positivo*” (571); the para-cinematic features of his written style (present tense, deictics, ‘framing’) support his showing (“La vita ingojata dalle macchine è lì, in quei vermi solitari, dico nelle pellicole già avvolte nei telai”); then, significantly, he grammatically extends his considerations to the plural, almost as if fictionally addressing an invisible fellow: “Siamo come in un ventre, nel quale si stia sviluppando e formando una mostruosa gestazione meccanica” (571). The powerful image of the workers’ hands in the reddened gloom of the room reintroduces the philosophical issue:

Mani, non vedo altro che mani, in queste camere oscure; mani affaccendate su le bacinelle; mani, cui il tetro lucore delle laterne rosse dà un'apparenza spettrale. Penso che queste mani appartengono a uomini che non sono più; che qui sono condannati ad esser mani soltanto: queste mani, strumenti. (572)

This insistence on the workers' hands mirrors Gubbio's insistence on his own alienation, and explains the reference to the 'many' in a similar condition he already alluded to.¹⁶⁰ Note that the narration is based on seeing the others' condition (i.e. *studying*) and thinking of his own (i.e. *finding out*); the narrative and interpretative paradigm is still "studio la gente [...], se mi riesca di scoprire". This 'study' goes beyond the paradigm of naturalism; it is para-cinematic instead, because it is immersive and fragmentary rather than detached and totalising.

However, whilst the essence of the film form (the immediacy and transparency whereby it relays scenes and isolated details) can be taken as a reference for Serafino's gaze, his subsequent telling is far from being cinematic overall. The cinematic mode is constantly contained by the narrative relief expressed by the text. The blending of the four main tenses, both for commentary and narrative purposes, creates a strongly pronounced narrative relief. Thus, while the present tense is clearly used both in its commentative and narrative functions, by the same token, past tenses are alternatively deployed both for retrospective commentaries and scenic purposes. Moreover, given the explicit temporal gap between the narrating-I and the experiencing-I, the scarce action of the novel is relayed through different tenses according to the distance from the fictional 'now' in which Gubbio writes. For example, in Nestoroff's suicidal dance before the camera, the *passato prossimo* stands out significantly simply because Gubbio's narration refers to a recent past ("questa mattina", 597). Another case in point, which is also paradigmatic of the various discursive and psychological dynamics outlined thus

¹⁶⁰ A similar rhetoric of framing and singling out of items will be found, in a more extremised instance of para-cinematic narration, in Italo Calvino's short story *La Signora Paulatim* (1958), which I will deal with in Chapter 6.

far, is the ending section of Notebook Three. This section begins with a commentary (“Non è tanto per me – Gubbio – l’antipatia, quanto per la mia macchinetta”, 584), and imperceptibly introduces, in the present tense, what I would refer to as a mere simulacrum of a recurrent scene at the studios (“Ascolta paziente tutte le proposte di scenarii, Cocò Polacco; ma a un certo punto alza una mano e dice: ‘Oh no, quest’è un po’ crudo”, 586-7). A further commentary follows, which is interrupted by an anecdote, organised in the narrative tenses (that of Senator Zeme at the studios). The scenic climax starts with Pau shouting and pointing to the awkward violinist, so that the *passato remoto* grows in frequency in Gubbio’s telling, by virtue of its foregrounding function. The violinist plays before the tiger in a suspended atmosphere, while the paragraph approaches its conclusion:

Scoppiarono applausi fragorosi. Fu preso, portato in trionfo. Poi, condotto alla prossima trattoria, nonostante le preghiere e le minacce di Simone Pau, bevve e s’ubriacò. Polacco s’è morso un dito dalla rabbia, per non aver pensato di mandarmi subito a prendere la macchinetta per fissare quella scena della sonata alla tigre. Come capisce bene tutto, sempre, Cocò Polacco! Io non potei rispondergli perché pensavo agli occhi della signora Nestoroff, che aveva assistito alla scena, come in un’estasi piena di sgomento. (592)

It is worth lingering a while on this passage because it condenses a common technique and the psychological kernel of the novel. For one thing, the *passato remoto* that had coherently supported the effect of foregrounding is abandoned when the group exits the place where Gubbio stands. “Bevve e s’ubriacò” is a retrospective summary that concludes the episode and prepares for the transition to the final comment (“Polacco s’è morso un dito”) where, significantly, the proper commentative tense of retrospection (the *passato prossimo*) operates the logical return to the man who writes in his fictional ‘now’. A sarcastic comment follows in the present – a further signal of Gubbio’s real spirit – and leads to the candid confession that the man, deprived of his camera at that moment, was actually engrossed in Nestoroff’s eyes. He could not reply to Polacco because he was enchanted (forget impassivity!). Moreover, the

ending phrase is also perfectly ambivalent, since the “estasi piena di sgomento” can be syntactically linked to both Gubbio and Nestoroff. From this and other clues, the man’s unconfessed and problematic attraction for Nestoroff (as well as for young Luisetta later) is revealed.¹⁶¹

Thus, one can see how Pirandello prepares the discursive sections to be foregrounded, and how the scenic effect is obtained both by the present and the perfect tense. Ultimately, the entire narrative is based on the progressive appearance of short scenes, characterised by a fixed perspective and limited details, which recall the way films were created at the time Pirandello composed the novel. Gubbio’s recollection of these scenes betrays a trace of the relative fixity of early cameras, however non-cinematic his account in words actually is overall. As Gubbio puts it: “Mi vedo talvolta assaltato con tanta violenza dagli aspetti esterni, che la nitidezza precisa, spiccata delle mie percezioni mi fa quasi sgomento. Diventa talmente mio quello che vedo con così nitida percezione, che mi sgomenta il pensare, come mai un dato aspetto – cosa o persona – possa non essere qual io lo vorrei” (600). These images are stored up in his ‘cinematic’ mind and re-surface in the act of writing, being interspersed with his ruminating.

At the end, Gubbio faces a series of progressive and always interconnected shocks that lead him to his final condition: innocent Luisetta plays a part with Nuti (the shock of love); Nestoroff’s aspect (“laido smortume”, 588) contrasts with her figure on the six canvases (the

¹⁶¹ Nestoroff embodies Gubbio’s antithesis and main object of study (“Studio, dunque, senza passione, ma intentamente questa donna” (555). Whilst the narrator is weak, decentered and replaceable, she appears to everybody (save Serafino) as a strong, stubborn, centre-of-the-world *prima donna*. Another key scene, in this sense, is the already-mentioned suicidal dance in which she establishes a sort of optical duel with bewildered Serafino, at the end of which he almost abandons the camera to reach her (“fui per accorrere anch’io”, 599). On eros and *thanatos* see Luperini (1999: 74) and Ganeri (2001: 194), who observes: “Antitetica all’imperturbabile Serafino, la donna ha dunque la funzione di un perturbante: incarnazione di eros e *thanatos*, è la virago il cui ventre attira (si pensi alla danza del finto suicidio) esattamente come quello della macchina cinematografica e delle camere oscure della Kosmograph”. See further interpretations in Ann Hallamore Caesar (1998: 219-30).

shock of degradation); Duccella and Nonna Rosa are miserable (the shock of time); the recomposition of domestic unity at Cavalena's is a mocking insult (the shock of masquerade); and the gory final act is the biggest shock of all (Nuti dies, Nestoroff dies; the shock of authenticity within inauthenticity; the shock of real life in the moment of death). Note that Gubbio fails to thwart the shooting, despite having understood that Nuti has thrust apart the boughs recreating the fictional forest at one side of the cage. If, on the level of the 'external' story, Gubbio's final *persona* (i.e., his mask) seems to be his reaction to deranged times, his interior distress may well also be caused by the definitive loss of his stronger, and more repressed, object of desire, i.e. the symbolic woman who by that point is dead, as Moses understands as well (1995: 15).¹⁶²

In conclusion, the narrative is all based on the protagonist's voyeurism, who only occasionally also 'sees himself living', like other typical Pirandellian characters ("Guardo ormai tutto, e anche me stesso, come da lontano", 548). However, it is important to remark that the voyeurism in this novel is entirely Gubbio's: the reader is almost never called to become a spectator of the events through Gubbio's telling; such a 'call', such a para-cinematic narrative contract, would ultimately clash with the philosophical underpinning of a narrative that ultimately rejects the paradigm of detachment, contemplation, and objective experience of the events. This paradigm was attached to naturalism at the time Pirandello was writing and would long be linked to film experience too.

¹⁶² Other interpreters offer more linear interpretations that ultimately overlook Gubbio as a human being. See Bärberi Squarotti (2001) and Baldi (2006: 157-8): "la funzione di operatore, di 'mano che gira la manovella', è la realizzazione compiuta dell'atteggiamento 'filosofico' che occorre di fronte a un 'tempo come questo', per non farsi inghiottire da esso. [...] Il 'silenzio di cosa' in cui l'eroe si chiude non è dunque alienazione nella macchina, ma liberazione dai legami di una realtà invivibile". To my mind, similar conclusions are correct but partial because do not account for Gubbio's personality, which remains neglected. Debenedetti (1971: 273) had already noted that "La vicenda si è chiusa. Ma non si sono chiusi i personaggi: le loro ragioni non accettano una spiegazione a senso unico".

Quaderni is built on a paradoxical and fairly cinematic external focalisation, which is all the more unusual in first-person narratives. The reader is always kept in a condition of cognitive disadvantage toward the story's events, thereby accumulating suspense that is only relieved at the end. The characters' minds are all substantially inaccessible: the protagonist's because of his reticence; the others' because of the constitutive paradigm of first-person narration. The narrator embodies a camera-eye agency throughout (in the *story*) but assumes the manner of a para-cinematic narrator only sporadically (in the *discourse*). However, according to the theoretical distinction I discussed above, one can see how the cinematic mode, and the para-cinematic narrator that enacts it, at certain points sneak into a narrative that is non-cinematic overall. Yet, the share of the filmic in the seven Notebooks and in the various episodes is ultimately marginal. Pirandello shapes his narrative with a considerable narrative relief that contrasts with the requirements of the cinematic mode of narration. The fragmentation of the narrative texture is certainly not due to a modulation of the film form, nor can it be assessed as an attempt to imitate the cinematic montage, which by that time had not been fully developed. Rather, the recomposition of a 'recorded' past, as well as the 'assault' of images, seem to evoke the process of film editing and the ontological aspect of the cinematic image, as well as the plausible effect that the film form could create in the early twentieth-century spectator. The novel, hence, blatantly thematises the cinema industry and apparatus, while also alluding to the two-fold orientation in time that the moving-image discloses.

On the other hand, if the cinematic mode is to be fully understood as a modulation of the film form within the structures of verbal narrative, then it is scarcely observable in a literary work, such as *Quaderni*, which irrefutably hinges on its oral-theatrical radical of presentation

and on genre constraints that are quite given by the written form of notebook.¹⁶³ However, the fact that, in such a composition, the cinematic mode becomes structurally appreciable is indicative of an orientation. *Quaderni di Serafino Gubbio operatore* fundamentally remains between the borders of pseudo-cinematic and cinematic narratives. In contrast to De Roberto and De Amicis's instances, it is an example of marginal adoption of the cinematic mode in fiction that foreshadows subsequent cases where the modulation of film more strongly emerges. Therefore, *Quaderni* constitutes a cornerstone of the cinematisation of fiction in the twentieth century. On the level of communication the filmic share in Pirandello is marginal; however, the key procedures of metonymic and synechdochical reduction, which the author had already employed in other works, are elaborated and reinforced with reference to cinema.¹⁶⁴ Voyeurism, as well as the problematic impassivity that reveals the hidden action of an agent, will return in other para-cinematic narratives, such as *La Jalousie* and *Teorema*; significantly, the images' 'assault' and the 'violence' of external reality (observable in De Amicis, too) will return as a theme in *Aracoeli* (see Chapter 5).

To summarise, my examples have described: (1) a kind of proto-cinematic fiction, where certain effects of immediacy and immersion are sought that will return in cinematic fiction later, but in which there is a substantial lack of other significant cinematic traits; (2) a kind of pseudo-cinematic fiction, where the cinema is mostly evoked and fundamentally taken as a

¹⁶³ Angelini (1990: 32) explains that the theatrical paradigm is key for Serafino and, consequently, for his account. Barilli (2003: 209-10) remarks the catastrophe and catharsis of the gory ending, "quasi da teatro elisabettiano", and connects the protagonist to Terence's archetype of the *heauton timorumenos* (The Self-Tormentor). Ganeri (2001: 191-2) stresses that "Serafino scrive un diario fortemente impregnato di sadismo e di masochismo".

¹⁶⁴ Angelini (1990: 22) adds that "è la macchina a fare a pezzi il personaggio, secondo una tecnica che proprio il cinema comico aveva scoperto e usato" and recalls early films: "Nell'*Agent à le bras long* (1908), comica di R. Bosetti, vediamo un agente inseguire e raggiungere i malfattori con un braccio allungabile a volontà: nel *Duel de Calino* (1909) dello stesso, il protagonista viene letteralmente fatto a pezzi e tuttavia continua a combattere da solo col braccio". Similar tricks are also observable in the later films of Keaton and Chaplin.

metaphor for the character's imagination; and (3) a kind of cinematic fiction, where besides being thematised, the cinema is also partly imitated in spite of the overall non-cinematic narrative configuration of the novel. In *Quaderni*, initial traces of the cinematic mode are found, which is to say that the film form is minimally modulated within the structures of the novel. Other elements such as the protagonist's status and voyeurism, or the cinematic rhetoric and techniques deployed in the narration, have also emerged.

On a historical level, the three Italian case studies also describe the emerging interplay of cinema and literature in increasingly marked forms of intermedial references. They coherently represent the successive phases of remediation of long-standing visual suggestions that are certainly, also, inextricably connected with the epistemological changes brought about by photography and cinema during the nineteenth and the turn of the twentieth century. From a narratological point of view, moreover, these three works of fiction offer a basic account of the three main 'narrative situations' that much twentieth-century fiction would exploit. The cinematic mode interacts with these narrative situations: the third-person, objective, so-called 'camera-eye', narrative situation in De Roberto will be found particularly in Hammett and Némirovsky with more direct reference to the cinema; the third-person narrative situation with internal focalisation in De Amicis will be found in Calvino's *Palomar*; and the first-person, subjective, 'filtered', or figural (Stanzel 1971, 1984) narrative situation, which is so ambiguously expressed by Serafino Gubbio's camera-eye, will be taken to its extreme in the *je-neant* of Robbe-Grillet's *La Jalouse*. Needless to say, the old and clearly 'authored' realistic novel of much preceding tradition, where writers were free to intervene and comment on the narrative in the course of its making, does not disappear; however, more equivocal narrative forms appear that also draw on the culture of cinema and the film form especially to replace that prior model.

In this sense, the border between proto-cinematic and cinematic fiction is a historical one: it is based on the advent of film and the establishment of the new medium as a qualified

medium. The border is clearly to be conceived as an ideal one, i.e. as a slow turn of age, a gradual permutation of premises, but one to which the cinematisation of writing is necessarily attached. This means that nothing prevents us from attributing the quality of proto-cinematic writing to texts that seemingly prefigure, or more directly evoke, the film form even before the cinema was established as a medium and an art. We are certainly free to discuss these works, or passages from these works, from Homer to Manzoni, Dickens, Flaubert or Conrad, through the reference to filmic categories; and it is clearly possible to treat certain textual features or passages as informed by proto-cinematic traits that would be more properly exploited in cinema and cinematic fiction later on. However, it is in the relation to the emergence of film as a medium that it makes sense to discuss how writers shaped their writing cinematically; and, as already emphasised, the cinematic mode must be attached to the author's plausible will, interests, and possibilities.

Conversely, the border between pseudo-cinematic and cinematic fiction is fundamentally a stylistic one, for it is based on the narrative pact with the reader. It superimposes the previous border, so it is grounded historically. This means that, in the film age, clear-cut cases of pseudo-cinematic fiction may be substantially different from those of cinematic fiction, because the style of the former is ultimately not truly shaped by the cinematic mode, while the style of the latter more properly includes strong elements of cinematisation. The borders are open to interconnections; thus, overlappings and nuances are obviously observable. An example of pseudo-cinematic novel is Morante's *Aracoeli*, which will be discussed at the end of the next chapter.

5. LITERARY REMEDIATION OF CINEMATIC CONSTRAINTS

5.1. Dashiell Hammett, *The Maltese Falcon*

At the end of the 1920s in the US, Dashiell Hammett's *The Maltese Falcon*¹⁶⁵ shaped the fundamental traits of the new genre of hard-boiled fiction.¹⁶⁶ The sophisticated plot, set in San Francisco,¹⁶⁷ features only a few characters who revolve around an enigmatic golden statuette that, at the end, turns out to be fake. Samuel Spade is a tough private eye who gets involved in an initial, misleading mystery by a seemingly frail and helpless 'Miss Wonderly', who unexpectedly enters his office one day asking for his service: her younger sister Corinne has run away with a thug named Floyd Thursby and might be in danger. This is the first of several red herrings. Spade sends his partner, Miles Archer, after Thursby, but the same night Archer is gunned down on a sidewalk. The woman then reveals that her first story was a lie

¹⁶⁵ Hammett (1894-1961) is the author of five crime novels and several short stories. He notoriously created three detective protagonists: the nameless 'Continental Op' appears in *Red Harvest* (1929), *The Dain Curse* (1929) and in twenty-eight short stories; Sam Spade only appears in *The Maltese Falcon* (1930); Nick Charles appears in *The Thin Man* (1934). Ned Beaumont is featured in *The Glass Key* (1931) but is not a professional detective. Hammett started working in 1915 as an anti-labour agent at Pinkerton's National Detective Service, a union-busting agency, and worked there until February 1922, when he began his career as a writer publishing short stories in the magazines *Smart Set* and *The Black Mask*. The Pinkerton period was crucial to him: "I found I could sell stories easily when it became known I was a Pinkerton man" he said. "People thought my stuff was authentic" (cf. Polito, 2000: XVI). He later became a Communist sympathiser and supported left-wing politics in the Thirties. He was sentenced to six months in prison for contempt of court in the McCarthy period, in 1951. All quotes from *The Maltese Falcon* refer to Hammett (2000).

¹⁶⁶ 'Hard-boiled' genre is often confused with the 'noir' genre. Horlsey (2001: 23-4) clarifies that both refer to narratives that have, as their protagonists, predators or victims as well as investigators. However, it is the tough, independent investigator who is mostly associated with the hard-boiled tradition.

¹⁶⁷ See the chapter devoted to San Francisco in Ralph Willett (1996), who points out its contrast with the more "crassly commercial and vulgar" Los Angeles and – with some exaggeration – its being "a Mecca for homosexuals" in *The Maltese Falcon* (37-8).

and her name is actually Brigid O'Shaughnessy, also hinting at a wider and unspecified backdrop of forces and events pushing her to Spade: he will have to trust her. A second narrative line is thus introduced that concerns their relationship, which finds its turning point in a undescribed sexual affair and its final culmination, during the conclusive denouement of the narrative threads, in Spade discovering her actual identity as a treacherous con artist. The quest for the statuette comes to the fore with the introduction of the Greek dandy Joel Cairo, described as a freak homosexual, who offers Spade a sum of money to find the object. However, Spade soon finds out that the rich, fat man with aristocratic manners Casper Gutman is pulling all the strings, and his hatchet man, Wilmer Cook – his ‘gunsel’, as Spade jeers at him – is constantly behind them. At the end, Spade solves a series of deadlocks and mysteries thanks to his tenacity and intuition. The search for the statuette revealed the nature of a corrupted world of ruthless figures, and Spade turns in Miss O'Shaughnessy, with whom he might have been in love, but whose trickery from the outset has undermined any possibility of reconciliation. Spade’s search for truth is finally satisfied because she also turns out to be the cold-blooded killer of Archer.

As Richard Layman points out (2005: 6), because of its genre, “*The Maltese Falcon* has been the object of no small amount of literary snobbery” for decades, even if some clever readers pointed out its value as soon as it was published; yet, “despite the acclaim by André Malraux, André Gide, Gertrude Stein and Dorothy Parker, to name a few, Hammett was categorized, even in his own mind, as a detective-fiction writer”, a classification that was far too narrow and has prevented critics from fully understanding how his fiction had forced the old genre structures of classic detective fiction and offered a more nuanced representation of the detective hero in the American milieu of the 1920s. Politically-oriented readings have also

affected Hammett's novels due to his growing status as a Communist icon.¹⁶⁸ He has gradually been acknowledged as a model of hard-boiled writing and found a wider and positive reception in recent times. The author's key role in the history of the genre has been noted against the old dime novels and other archetypal examples of the linear and deductive novel of investigation, where rationality triumphs over deception, such as in Conan Doyle, Gilbert K. Chesterton or Agatha Christie (cf. Gregory, 1985: 19). William Marling (1995: 126) claims that *The Maltese Falcon* "is arguably America's greatest detective novel, but its status as such is the product of a continuing cultural consensus". Contemporary critics (cf. extensively in Rzepka and Horsley, 2010) have emphasised the originality of the tough private eye working in an urban context, which is in stark contrast to the analytical amateur operating in the countryside who appears in various classic detective stories. Hammett's cityscape is made of cynicism, corruption, pretence and hidden truths. In fact, unlike his literary predecessors who did not know much about real crime, Hammett in fact did. As Raymond Chandler (1995: 978) put it in *The Simple Art of Murder* (1944), Hammett wrote some much longed-for "realistic mystery fiction" with his "spare, frugal, hard-boiled" style, and "gave murder back to the kind of people that commit it for reasons, not just to provide a corpse" (989). Yet in Spade, new ethical concerns are also found, besides his individual strength, intuition, and brisk manners: George J. Thompson (2006: 96) has highlighted the "renunciation plot" of *The*

¹⁶⁸ For a reconstruction of Hammett's ambiguous political background and the misunderstanding of critics, divided between his fascist and progressist traits, see Jacob Zumoff, who summarises Hammett's particular ideology referring to one of his main fictional characters, the Continental Op: "The Op combines redemptive violence with sexist, racist and xenophobic views. He dislikes large-scale capitalism but does not have a socialist vision. What distinguishes Hammett's vision from both Communism and fascism is that he seems not to have *any* vision of a purified society" (2012: 92). The first reference to Italian fascism is found at the beginning of *Red Harvest* and concerns the situation that ruthless magnate Elihu Willsson has created in Personville, confirming the seminal importance of this topic: "old Elihu didn't know his Italian history. He won the strike, but he lost his hold on the city and the state. To beat the miners he had to let his hired thugs run wild. When the fight was over he couldn't get rid of them" (Hammett, 2000: 443).

Maltese Falcon and the sub-text about Spade's non-recounted feelings, as well as his moral integrity.¹⁶⁹ In spite of certain snobbish allegations, the novel proves to be a nuanced narrative aiming at 'serious' literature more than being a commercial product.¹⁷⁰

If the novel shows innovative features compared to previous detective fiction, it also displays traits on the level of its narrative technique recalling the growing influence of the lucrative cinema industry and the widespread interest in the behaviourist style that was championed, among others, by Ernest Hemingway. As Thompson (2006: 112) puts it, we know Spade "by what he does; his private actions define who and what he is". His personality is revealed through his behaviour rather than described through his feelings. Spade's reaction to Archer's death at the beginning of the second chapter is particularly telling: suspense increases while Archer's name is not mentioned, and we only read Spade's cold muttering on the phone in the middle of the night ("Hello... Yes, speaking... Dead?... Yes... Fifteen minutes. Thanks"; 13); then he is scrupulously described as he rolls a cigarette (an action that becomes a recurring habit to his character). He is even portrayed while quickly changing clothes:

He scratched the back of his neck and began to dress. He put on a thin white union-suit, grey socks, black garters, and dark brown shoes. When he had fastened his shoes he picked up the telephone, called Greystone 4500, and ordered a taxicab. He put on a

¹⁶⁹ Spade's credo is the job well done. His fictional predecessor, Continental Op, has a nastier idea of his profession: "I've got hard skin all over what's left of my soul, and after twenty years of messing around with crime I can look at any sort of murder without seeing anything in it but my bread and butter, the day's work" (Hammett, 2000: 587). In the final dialogue of *The Maltese Falcon*, instead, when Brigid asks Spade if he would have treated her differently had he obtained some money from the falcon business, he replies: "Don't be too sure I'm as crooked as I'm supposed to be. That kind of reputation might be good for business – bringing in high-priced jobs and making it easier to deal with the enemy" (Hammett, 2000: 223).

¹⁷⁰ Hammett himself was confident of this. In the letter attached to his revisions of *Red Harvest* and sent to his editor, Blanche Knopf, he wrote: "I'm one of the few – if there are any more – people moderately literate who take the detective story seriously. I don't mean that I necessarily take my own or anybody else's seriously – but the detective story as a form. Some day somebody's going to make 'literature' of it" (cf. Polito, 2000: XIV).

green-striped white shirt, a soft white collar, a green necktie, the grey suit he had worn that day, a loose tweed overcoat, and a dark grey hat. The street-door-bell rang as he stuffed tobacco, keys, and money into his pockets.

Where Bush Street roofed Stockton before slipping downhill to Chinatown, Spade paid his fare and left the taxicab. (14)

This excerpt is representative of the entire syntagmatic structure of the novel: we read a typical para-cinematic description that is followed by a cut (a blank) directly leading to the following scene – the crime scene in this case. This description may be considered rather redundant in most literary fiction, but here it gains the precise function of displaying the character in action, allowing the reader a sharper visualisation of his gestures in sequence, much in the way a film of that time would have done. And yet, more than the visual quality that prompts a certain spatialisation of the scene, which is more evident in other passages, it is the narrative rhythm that is key, flattened on external transient reality. The articulation of past tenses produces only a minimal narrative relief: “the grey suit he had worn that day” creates a minimal narrative background within a narration that is dominated by action verbs in the simple past and therefore held in a constant narrative foreground. This para-cinematic feature might also explain Chandler’s (1995: 978) admiration for “scenes that seemed never to have been written before”.

All characterisation of Spade and the other figures is made masterfully with particular insistence on bodily features. However, it is crucial that these are not made definitively when the characters appear, but are continuously recalled, modulated, and embedded in the midst of the actions and verbal sparring, which unfold by means of slang and puns. *The Maltese Falcon* almost seems to be a study in kinesics. From the beginning lines, the narrator establishes a para-cinematic narrative contract with the reader, who is called to visualise the characters’ attributes, gestures, manners, clothes, as well as their movements in spaces that are *not* minutely described, but only sketched and suggested by decisive details, objects, colours and pieces of furniture. Broad naturalist description is decisively rejected; and subtle minutiae à la

Henry James are unwelcomed; introspection forbidden. The novel opens with an extreme close-up, a bottom-up descriptive movement from Spade's jaws to his hair.¹⁷¹ His face is connoted by his “yellow-grey eyes” and sharp facial traits – a “v motif”, for he is a ‘blond satan’ (5). Spade’s traits seem to recall the German expressionist style in cinema and visual art typically made up of strong contrasts of light and lines: when he smiles at Miss Wonderly his facial traits are emphasised: “all the v’s in his face grew longer” (6). Spade’s first close-up is interrupted by the voice of his secretary Effie Perine, which introduces her ‘lanky’ (5) figure. She is described at a distance (a reverse-shot from Spade’s point of view) and then focused on with another extreme close-up on her eyes, “brown and playful in a shiny boyish face” (5). Such close-up movement on the characters’ eyes will become an important stylistic motif in the book and one of the most relevant stylistic traits of hard-boiled genre in fiction, films and comics. Effie Perine’s desexualised aspect is totally contrasting with Spade’s and Miss Wonderly’s (“tall and pliantly slender, without angularity anywhere”, 5) and this visual characterisation of the *femme fatale* introduces the pattern involving all other purposefully ‘flat’ figures: the awkward dandy, the fat rich man, the young braggart, the “barrel-bellied” cop (19). Clear-cut characterisation had obviously already been widely exploited in literature and popular fairy tales, but here it visually bolsters all other stylistic features of the text and aims at a new briskness. Such iconic physiognomy will serve as a model for countless films, especially *noirs* and Westerns from the 1940s onwards, and is still evidently exploited in contemporary works such as Frank Miller’s graphic novel *Sin City* (1991; film version, 2005) or in Quentin Tarantino’s characters.

In another extract, the very cinematic interaction of visual perspectives and diegetic sounds reflects what I have already emphasised in Chapter 2. The external focalisation of this

¹⁷¹ Cf. with Calvino’s inverse descriptive movement in Chapter 6.

narrative is combined with internal ocularisation and auricularisation. The following is another typical situation preluding a core scene (note the minimal narrative relief that is created by the interaction of the past perfect and *-ing* verbal forms):

He had drunk his third glass of Bacardi and was lighting his fifth cigarette when the street-door-bell rang. The hands of the alarm-clock registered four-thirty.

Spade sighed, rose from the bed, and went to the telephone-box beside his bathroom door. He pressed the button that released the street-door-lock. He muttered, ‘Damn her’, and stood scowling at the black telephone-box, breathing irregularly while a dull flush grew in his chicks.

The grating and rattling of the elevator-door opening and closing came from the corridor. Spade sighed again and moved towards the corridor-door. Soft heavy footsteps sounded on the carpet floor outside, the footsteps of two men. Spade’s face brightened. His eyes were no longer harassed. He opened the door quickly. (18-9)

The reference to the alarm clock can be taken as either Spade’s glance at it (internal ocularisation) or as a mere additional detail provided by the narrator (zero ocularisation). In both cases, the object is focused on and brought to the foreground; the narrative pace is surprising, and Hammett’s penchant for syntactic coordination, along with the welter of visual details, seems to replicate the cinematic fragmentation of images. We then come to see Spade moving around inside his apartment and perceiving some sounds outside his front door (internal auricularisation). His face is mentioned, with the customary close-up on his eyes, until he opens the door, behind which two policemen stand. They are let in and one of the numerous dialogues begins with its typical blend of deceptive stances, harsh replies and phony conclusions.¹⁷² But why is Spade swearing at a woman? And why is he relieved then? We know that Spade had sent Effie Perine to break the news to Archer’s wife Iva; now an allusion to her visiting him seems to be inferred, but two men actually turn up at the door. No explanation is given; we only perceive a storyworld in progress. Only in the following chapter

¹⁷² Hall (2010: 455) notes that throughout the novel “the conflict between the detective, Sam Spade, and his two main opponents, Brigid O’Shaughnessy and Caspar Gutman, revolves not so much around the question of good and evil, or truth and falsehood, but around who tells the best stories”.

will we apprehend that there has been an affair between Spade and Iva, and a further red herring will be introduced.¹⁷³

Hammett gives the reader only behavioural clues and indirect signs of the characters' feelings. Being placed at the turn of the silent and sound eras, this novel reproduces the fragmented linearity and a number of stylistic suggestions mediated by the film form, already well-developed by that time, while on the other hand posing itself as a blueprint for more hard-boiled films and fiction to come. Hammett lived in New York when he published *The Maltese Falcon* and moved to Hollywood from 1930 to 1931, where he had several contacts with the film industry, even in the following years.¹⁷⁴ The third-person narration, which Hammett introduced after the first-person style of the two previous novels, contributes to the effectiveness of the novel and shows that the cinematic mode is fully integrated in its generic and subgeneric traits. As Layman (2005: 7) also points out:

The structure of the novel is careful and purposeful. While the plot is clearly cinematic, *The Maltese Falcon* was written before talkies were introduced. Hammett was a play and silent-movie fan, and by the time his third novel was published, he had visited Hollywood to discuss adaptation of his story ideas for the screen. He wrote his novel with an economy of settings, characters, and action that make it well suited for performance.

This style might also have been stimulated by commercial aims; however, Hammett's unadorned prose nonetheless proves to be of aesthetic value for it gives shape to a constantly

¹⁷³ “‘Are you going to marry Iva?’ she asked, looking down at his pale brown hair. ‘Don’t be silly’, he muttered. The unlighted cigarette bobbed up and down with the movement of his lips. ‘She doesn’t think it’s silly. Why should she – the way you’ve played around with her?’” (Hammett, 2000: 29).

¹⁷⁴ His works of fiction have been repeatedly adapted into films. In particular, *Red Harvest* was transposed into Hobart Henley’s *Roadhouse Nights* (1930); *The Maltese Falcon* inspired several films such as Roy Del Ruth’s adaptation (*The Maltese Falcon*, 1931) to which Hammett contributed as a screenwriter, but also Henry Blanke’s more soft and farcical version (*Satan Meets a Lady*, 1936) and, most importantly, John Huston’s movie (*The Maltese Falcon*, 1941) starring Humphrey Bogart as Sam Spade; *The Glass Key* was adapted in 1935 (director Frank Tuttle) and in 1942 (Stuart Heisler’s noir of the same title). *The Thin Man* was first adapted in 1934 by W.S. Van Dyke and Lesley Selander’s and had five other versions from 1934 to 1947. See William H. Mooney (2014) for a comprehensive study on this topic.

transforming storyworld where the narrative events inexorably proceed through sudden appearances, revelations and permutations of roles. Following in part the generic conventions of detective fiction, but also due to its specific para-cinematic quality, the novel is dominated by a sense of instability and unpredictability that reflects both the excitement of the Roaring 20s and the troubled American society during Prohibition that was about to witness the Wall Street Crash in 1929.¹⁷⁵ The quest's object, in particular, is a worthless fake and emblematises a world of meaningless items and desires. Yasmine Yong Hall (2010) stresses how people increasingly become bodies and exchangeable items to satisfy greed and personal aims, and how the typical *machismo*, the alleged 'neutrality' and rigid code of honour of Hammett's private eyes stem as a reaction to such a culture.¹⁷⁶ Marling (1995: 147) correctly points out that "if we can say that Brigid represents speculative attitude, we may add that Spade functions as a prudent creditor, collecting his fees from everyone, feigning interest in their projects, but foreclosing when losses loom".

¹⁷⁵ See 'Introduction: 1927' in William Marling (1995), who singles out the exceptionality of the year 1927, with the introduction of the screw-base light bulb and the advent of the sound era in cinema with *The Jazz Singer*, beyond other shifts in technology and habits during the 1920s, such as the transformations in industry and fashion, the raising radio culture ("[it] spoke like the voice of God", 7), the spread of alcohol and a new jargon ("everybody was tough", 4). Zumoff (2012: 84) also points out that Hammett's characters are constantly drinking bootleg alcohol, both to underline their moral ambiguity and to get what they want, and "this continual alcoholic theme highlights the corruption endemic in the Prohibition society". See also more focused analyses: Richard Filloy (1986: 259) points out how Prohibition "did more than provide a basis for the morally ambiguous world which Hammett set out to portray", and stresses the "use of drinking as a moral marker" (261) in the fiction of this kind; Rita Elisabeth Rippetoe (2004: 33) claims that "this seemingly narrow topic is in fact central to virtually everything Hammett wrote".

¹⁷⁶ The 'Flitcraft story' is central to the definition of Spade's worldview. He recounts it in Chapter 7: Flitcraft, a man well-positioned professionally and with a wife and family in the city suburbs, escaped death the day a beam fell from a construction site. He realised how life is governed by chance and, as a consequence of this traumatic event, he abandoned his family and his previous life, only to reappear some years later exactly in the same situation elsewhere. Spade draws the conclusion: "he adjusted himself to beam falling, and then no more of them fell, and he adjusted himself to them not falling". Several interpretations of this parable have been proposed; in general, it seems to convey Spade's persuasion that if there is no order and certainty and stability in life, a man, and particularly an investigator, must understand that and adapt his position to beams falling. See also Spade's obsession throughout the story and in his final dialogue with Brigid: "I'm not Thursby. I'm not Jacobi. I won't play the sap for you" (Hammett, 2000: 220). Cf. Marling (1995: 138-9) about the term *sap*, "which is slang for 'saphead'".

The story is not recounted from a later perspective where the mystery has been solved, the criminals have been punished and the social order is restored. At the end, we do not even know what will happen to Miss O'Shaughnessy, if she will be hanged or sent to prison for life. Nor do we know anything about all the other characters' past. Spade is caught in an episode of his investigative job. The narrative discourse is flattened on fictional events that are kept within a 'flowing' foreground. With a play of words, one may say that here the detection plot is more about a *slice of detective life* than about the mystery itself. Most importantly, despite being narrated in the past tenses, the story becomes *presentified* and *presented* to the reader on the basis of a 'live' vantage point. Back in March 1928, Hammett had explained his ideas for a new novel, most likely *The Maltese Falcon*, to his editor Blanche Knopf: "I want to try adapting the stream-of-consciousness method, conveniently modified, to a detective story, carrying the reader along with the detective, showing him everything as it is found, giving him the detective conclusions as they are reached, letting the solution break on them together" (Polito, 2000: XIV). The cinematic mode finds its roots in the new treatment of time that was typical of modernism in general, when the film form, too, found its first fundamental technical and theoretical codifications. As Mark Eaton (2009: 487) points out, "from the beginning, hard-boiled detective fiction arguably occupied a liminal or in-between status in the literary field, with one foot in the sea of mass culture and the other tentatively testing the waters of modernism". This is not the place to open a further discussion on Hammett and literary modernism, unfortunately. Yet, I shall only observe that, on the opposite side of the literary techniques aiming at verbalising the characters' consciousness we find those techniques aimed at rendering the external world of surfaces: but these are two sides of the same coin, as Alain Robbe-Grillet would soon understand with his novel *La Jalousie*. *The Maltese Falcon* thus exemplifies a crucial dynamic: the novel modulated some consolidated cinematic traits and provided new, hybrid traits for subsequent re-formalisations by the cinema industry.

On the level of characterisation, a final consideration is needed. One of the great revolutions of cinema was the possibility of peering more directly at the aspect and actions of people, objects and situations so different from those with which the audiences were familiar. Taming a fire, robbing a train, driving a car.¹⁷⁷ The cinema brought long-standing desires of marvel into a new technological era, and its fundamental driving force still acts today. The escapist function in fiction preceded cinema by ages, certainly. However, what changed with the advent of cinema were themes and narrative techniques. Early films increasingly opened new windows onto the plurality of the external world, and Hollywood's filmmakers in particular narrativised new and increasingly exotic subjects on the screen. With Samuel Spade and the para-cinematic writing employed in *The Maltese Falcon*, Hammett remediated the immediacy that film has in presenting actions and unusual situations to curious spectators. He immersed cohorts of readers into his crime stories more effectively. Plunging into the dangerous routine of a two-fisted private eye would certainly have had a special cinematic allure for the readers of that time.

¹⁷⁷ See for example James Williamson's *Fire!* (1901), Edwin S. Porter's *Life of an American Fireman* (1903) and *The Great Train Robbery* (1903), or Henry Lehrman's *The Kid Auto Race in Venice* (1914) featuring the first appearance of Charlie Chaplin's Little Tramp.

5.2. Irène Némirovsky, *Film parlé*

Having been an acclaimed writer in the 1930s, Irène Némirovsky (1903-1942) died at Auschwitz and fell into obscurity in France until the 1980s. She was virtually unknown in the English-speaking world until her *Suite française* was published in France in 2004 and translated into English in the spring of 2006; following the huge international success of this novel, Adelphi began publishing her books in Italy too.¹⁷⁸

In 1934-1935 Némirovsky published her short stories collection *Films parlés*.¹⁷⁹ The story titled *Film parlé* is genuinely cinematic in its attempt to produce the cinematic narration onto the written page. The simple plot concerns a mother-daughter encounter after several years, during which daughter Anne has grown up in the custody of her mean aunt in the boring, French provinces, following her prostitute mother's abandonment. Having reached her mother Éliane in Paris and having become a prostitute herself, Anne severs all ties with her again, but finds herself in need of money and forced to turn to her mother for financial support.

As emphasised by biographer Olivier Philipponnat (Némirovsky, 2009: 12), Némirovsky exploits rather stereotyped literary conventions throughout the story and openly reuses a range of narrative clichés, such as Anne's passionate but penniless young lover, perhaps in order to put together a romance that could be potentially brought to the big screen and easily commercialised. Némirovsky was already a well-known writer by the time of the publication

¹⁷⁸ See Olivier Corpet and Garrett White (2008) on Némirovsky's life. See Angela Kershaw (2015) on the influence of English literature on the writer.

¹⁷⁹ There is uncertainty about the exact date of the first edition of *Films parlés* in the Gallimard collection 'Renaissance de la nouvelle' edited by Paul Morand. Some critics report it was published in February 1935 (Philipponnat and Lienhardt 2007), others point to December 1934 (Kershaw, 2010: 217). The collection contained four short stories, presented as 'screenplays': *Ida*, *Film parlé*, *Les Fumées du vin* and *La Comédie bourgeoise*. *Film parlé* is now included in *Les Vierges et Autres Nouvelles* (Némirovsky 2009), from which I quote.

thanks to the success of her novel *David Golder* (1929) and was also highly passionate about cinema and well-connected in the industry. The adaptation of *David Golder* was brought to the wide screen in 1930 by Julien Duvivier and raised attention thanks in part to it being the filmmaker's first sound film.¹⁸⁰ Némirovsky even attempted to write some screenplays, and no later than June 1931 declared: “je médite des projets de films. Mes personnages se meuvent devant moi. Je n’invente les sentiments qu’après...” (Derroyer 1931).

Film parlé first appeared as a ‘scénario inédit’ in the journal ‘Oeuvres Libres’ in July 1931. As can be seen even from the title, the text is fundamentally connoted so as to make its author appear an aspiring screenwriter, an outsider aiming to be included in a closed circle of practitioners. Although it may seem a mere stylistic exercise, *Film parlé* is evidence that the film form has penetrated the writer’s mindset by the beginning of the 1930s, and this form merges with her novelistic approach to generate a hybrid form, a ‘spoken film’ in fact. This formula, as well as some of the cinematic solutions recreated on the page, may actually appear rather naïve; however, despite the range of fairy-tale clichés throughout the plot and the straightforward translation of some cinematic techniques in the text, Némirovsky’s narrative is overall surprising and even anticipates later works such as those of the *école du regard*.

The fairly artificial prose of this short story flows cinematically instead of prosaically. In order to trigger a plausible cinematic effect in the reader, the author had to rearrange her mental disposition toward the finished work, thereby calibrating a shortened timing for the changes of scene, and re-tuning the overall effect of environmental noises and atmosphere music (the characters actually move in jazz bars and brothels). A range of cinematic techniques, such as establishing shots, tracking shots, shot/reverse shots, dissolves, and ellipses

¹⁸⁰ The novel was also turned into a play by dramatist Fernand Nozière; the play “had its première at the Théâtre de la Porte Saint-Martin on Friday, December 26, 1930, just nine days after the first showing of the film” (Weiss, 2007: 49).

merge into a narration counterpointed by short dialogues.¹⁸¹ Némirovsky's treatment of visual details, auditory signals or environmental noise is particularly remarkable. These are inserted regularly but sparingly, as the narrator focuses only on the preeminent qualities of the scenes, thereby leaving the reader the task of completing the storyworld mentally. The visualisation of the storyworld thus flows on the prompt of written words as it would at the cinema on the prompt of extremely accurate, but transient, images.¹⁸² Némirovsky manages to do that with an inventive and daring narrative technique:

[La concierge] rentre chez elle, ferme brusquement la porte de sa loge. Anne hésite un instant; elle semble très lasse; elle ôte son chapeau trop lourd et qui l'accable. Mais d'un coin d'ombre, la silhouette d'un agent s'est détachée. Anne prend peur, fait un mouvement de bête poursuivie, se remet à marcher péniblement le long du mur. On la voit s'éloigner dans la rue vide et se perdre. Le refrain du jazz reprend, lointain d'abord, assourdi, puis sauvage et strident. Un épaisse fumée s'envole lentement. C'est le bar de nouveau. Mais il est près de sept heures et la petite salle est comble. (31)

The change of location is created through the combined effect of two cinematic techniques: the first is a sort of prototypical 'J-cut', which is a split-editing technique that consists of anticipating the following scene by means of the audio track, precisely by acousmatic music.¹⁸³ While the L-Cut had already been introduced by the time Némirovsky was writing her story,

¹⁸¹ Biographers Olivier Philipponnat and Patrick Lienhardt erroneously talk of "quatre nouvelles visuelles, montées comme des plans-séquences et fort dépourvues de psychologie" (Philipponnat and Lienhardt, 2007: 263).

¹⁸² In some passages, it is clear that the desired effect is that of an unpredictable and rapidly changing visualisation, often strengthened with close-ups: "Devant elle, une fille en grand chapeau rouge va et vient, cherche un client dans l'ombre. Comme elle passe devant Anne, on voit la forme de sa bouche fardée à l'excès, et ses yeux de bête battue (41); "Le jet de lumière d'un bec de gaz éclaire brusquement une longue jambe de femme découverte jusqu'au genou" (44).

¹⁸³ Acousmatic means that the source of sound is not visualised. Acousmatic media like radio or telephone transmit sound without showing their emitter.

the J-Cut perhaps had not been used yet;¹⁸⁴ however, silent films were screened with a live orchestra that supported and oriented the images on the screen, and the first sound movies experimented with audiovisual effects. In the excerpt quoted above, the jazz music raises because Anne is described while approaching Willy's Bar and because the montage re-created on the page exploits – exactly where the text also includes a dissolve – one of the typical tricks of continuity editing. A dissolve, creatively achieved through the fading smoke of cigarettes, conveys the transition to the loud, crowded hall where a band is playing. ‘But now it’s seven o’clock’ says the narrator, therefore a certain amount of time must have passed, and the loud music that is strategically heard before Anne arrives seems to verbalise a filmic ambiguous extradiegetic sound. In this rather dense excerpt, one also finds the first backward movement of several cross-cuttings: the beginning of the story has introduced Éliane at the bar and has subsequently introduced Anne at her aunt’s place; now we find fugitive Anne in Paris; and in the following we are brought again inside the bar, momentarily abandoning her walk toward the address and by re-focusing on Éliane dancing in the arms of a rich Argentinian man. Anne’s subsequent entrance is hence visualised from the inside (“Derrière eux, la porte s’ouvre avec lenteur [...]. Enfin Anne paraît”, 32), according to a highly codified cinematic montage and ocularisation.

Regarding the treatment of auditory elements, it is also interesting to observe how another cinematic constraint, and a technical expedient, comes to be exploited on the page:

¹⁸⁴ In Alan Crosland’s *The Jazz Singer* (1927), the first ‘talkie’ of history of cinema, there is, for example, an L-cut from the singer to the audience. We hear the singer talking with his bandmates while watching the audience taking their seats. An interesting case of a prototypical J-cut is in Chaplin’s *City Lights*, which was released between January and February 1931: in the famous opening sequence, we find Charlot sleeping on the newly-inaugurated statue; when he tries to climb down, the extradiegetic music turns to intradiegetic music (the US national anthem), and the policeman who is shouting at him takes position. The intradiegetic acousmatic music obviously anticipates and determines the policeman’s reaction as well as Charlot’s in the following reverse shot.

La sœur s'est arrêtée; elle frappe dans ses mains, fait hâter le pas aux fillettes, pince le lèvres en passant devant Anne. [...] Tandis que le pensionnat s'éloigne, elle rentre; on entend le bruit de la porte cochère qui retombe, un pas vif dans l'escalier, le bonjour de la concierge et la voix claire d'Anne:

'Bonjour, madame, quel beau temps...'

Au bar, Éliane, Célia, la vieille femme au monocle et Ada, la fille poitrinaire, sont assises sur les hauts tabourets, boivent, fument et discutent. Les lampes sont allumées comme à l'ordinaire, mais le soleil brille sur le seuil. (42)

We do not 'enter' Anne's house along with her. As it were, we stop outside the entrance door and are given auditory signals regarding her walking and talking that would not be caught by an intradiegetic human hearing from the street. The description embedded when the entrance door is shut sounds perfectly pointless, because it only enacts the transition to the following scene; however, this para-cinematic rendition of non-visualised sources of sounds, albeit fairly pedantic here, is remarkable. These sounds and voices seem somewhat enhanced and conveyed as if they were on the audio track of a film; ocularisation and auricularisation are not split, since the spatiotemporal unity of the scene is maintained, but the visual data are withheld. Moreover, after the very cinematic cut, we move again to the bar where sunlight appears under the door. Thus, without any explicit explanation, we retrospectively understand that Anne has come back at dawn after one of her first attempts as a streetwalker, when the schoolgirls are around (a cliché still exploited today, see the beginning of Paolo Sorrentino's *La grande bellezza*, 2013), and that her mother, too, has stayed out overnight and is still at Willy's Bar.

The narration is led in a genuine external focalisation that renders the story literally 'superficial' and truly externalised, since no account of the characters' thoughts is given. In place of the psychological account, a detailed treatment of bodily gestures articulates the characters' attitudes and moods:

Éliane enfin murmure:

'Oh, Anne, qu'est-ce que tu as fait?'

Anne baisse davantage la tête; on ne voit pas sa figure. On voit seulement ses mains qui jouent nerveusement avec les couteaux à dessert jetés sur la table. Des mains de fillette,

d'écolière, abîmées par les travaux de ménage, l'index piqué de coups d'aiguille et les ongles coupés ras. Éliane, comme malgré elle, les contemple, et elle-même tord silencieusement, d'un geste identique, ses doigts minces, blancs, que l'oisiveté et les soins parent d'une sorte d'aristocratique langueur. (34-5)

The ‘reaction shot’ of Anne’s face is clearly performed from a fixed point of view, which one guesses is high enough to limit the visualisation to her hair and hands, thereby contributing to the general visual effect of the scene. In fact, the figure of Anne in a submissive posture is consequently reinforced by an extreme close-up on her fingertips and immediately contrasted by her mother’s, which represent a symbol of power and commodity (“aristocratique langueur”). But the reader also immediately understands that the first ocularisation of Anne’s head and hands is clearly the mother’s gaze (in fact we soon read that “Éliane, comme malgré elle, les contemple”), while the second ocularisation of Éliane’s hands is more distanced and cannot be given from Anne’s perspective; indeed, she will raise her head only some lines below. Thus, the comparison between the daughter’s and the mother’s hands unfolds as the juxtaposition enacted by a para-cinematic narrator. The narrator first aligns with the visual perspective of the mother, who is quite realistically readier to observe such a detail than the daughter; after that, the narrator conveys a non-subjective perspective – in other words, the photographic objectivity of the cinematic *monstrator* – with which the recipient of the narrative is forced to remain. Beyond the technical jargon, this is what normally happens in the common alternation of a few frames in films, and Némirovsky shows a full understanding and an effectively advanced interiorisation of cinematic language.

At any rate, the text also includes a range of explicit passages that reveal how Némirovsky’s short story actually remains a fairly gratuitous and merely formalistic attempt. A whole series of comments in the impersonal form render the narration almost like an ekphrasis of an actual

film.¹⁸⁵ However, these comments, despite temporarily breaking the reader's immersion into the storyworld, immediately reintroduce the para-cinematic visualisation. It is as if the story, which is aimed at being perceived cinematically by the reader, were momentarily seen at a further distance, as if the actual visualisation inside a cinema theatre were recreated on the page. But these elementary passages, in turn, confirm that the act of telling – I would say the *posture* itself of the narrator – is a cinematic one, as if there were someone moving the camera handle as in Pirandello's *Quaderni di Serafino Gubbio operatore*. One will also appreciate the difference between *Film parlé* and Elsa Morante's *Aracoeli*, a difference stemming from the grammatical impersonal form, in contrast with the first-person narration of Morante's novel of 1982. If the latter is fundamentally a non-cinematic novel because the narrator's account betrays the verbalisation – the uttering of – the cinematic metaphor, in *Film parlé* there is no metaphorisation of the cinema, but rather an actual modulation of its means and tricks, albeit fairly rudimentary.

Némirovsky's syntax also becomes fragmented, shortened and seems to replicate the cinematic cuts, thereby marking a strong feature of the cinematic manner of writing: the adoption of a style marked by sharp parataxis or, at least, by a generalised avoidance of hypotaxis, in which a welter of cinematic solutions are deployed:

Un silence. À côté, les cris, les rires deviennent plus bruyant, grinçant et faux. Éliane tressaille, se lève, commande à voix basse :
‘Viens.’

Elles sortent toutes les deux par une porte dérobée qui donne sur la rue. Un taxi passe et s'arrête. L'image de la pièce s'efface. Seules les ampoules électriques allumées de chaque côté du miroir brillent un moment et la glace semble se creuser et se remplir d'ombre. Puis elle grandit, change de forme, apparaît au pied du lit, dans la chambre d'Éliane. Un lit immense surmonté d'un dais de velours, avec des amours en bronze qui tiennent à la main des flambeaux et des cornes d'abondance renversées. Désordre, poussière. Quelques photographies d'homme, fixées dans la rainure de la cheminée. Assise sur le bord du lit,

¹⁸⁵ See further examples: “L'image du lac s'efface” (53); “L'image s'éloigne” (55); “L'image s'efface” (56), and so on.

Anne tient une assiette sur ses genoux et mord avidement dans un morceau de pain et de galantine. Tendis qu'elle mange, Éliane est debout, adossée à la coiffeuse. Elle observe sa fille presque durement. Anne, rassasiée, repose l'assiette et sourit avec un peu de gêne. Éliane s'approche, s'assied sur le lit, met doucement sa main sur le front d'Anne, la caresse avec une sorte de timidité, lisse en arrière les cheveux. Enfin, avec une expression d'agitation et de souffrance, elle murmure :

‘Anne.’

‘Oui, madame.’

‘Il faut m'appeler maman.’

Anne se tait. (36-7)

The characters' movements from the quieter room inside Willy's Bar to Éliane's apartment unfold in a few lines, characterised by a para-cinematic dissolve (the bar's room and exterior with taxi – dissolve – Éliane's room), where two details (the two lamps and the mirror) slowly vanish and turn into new objects inside Éliane's flat. It is easy to visualise Éliane's room as a rather squalid, but not bleak, apartment, while the mirror is being swallowed by the darkening dissolve and turned into the floor before the bed, and while the two lamps, previously described as standing at the mirror's two sides, turn into the detail of some *putti* and *cornucopiae*. In a few lines, this effectively para-cinematic narrator creates a suggestive spatiotemporal transition and a powerful image of innocent Anne framed by the velvet canopy and sitting on her mother's ‘immense’ bed, also giving a hint of the decorative fashion of the time and, above all, anticipating and symbolising Anne's future illusion of prosperity, as well as her naïve attitude. This kind of transition, through the technique of dissolve, is exploited throughout the text.¹⁸⁶

Moreover, in support of the syntactical linearity certain cursory passages in nominal style transmit further details (“Désordre, poussière. Quelques photographies d'homme, fixées dans la rainure de la cheminée”). Such recurring additions of particulars in *Film parlé* associate with

¹⁸⁶ For another instance, see how Anne and Luc's decision to live together is signalled in the text: “L'image de leurs bras enlacés, de leurs lèvres jointes, semble s'effacer dans l'ombre, et le murmure étouffé, amoureux, se transforme en un rire d'Anne joyeux et triomphant. Ils sont assis tous les deux sur une espèce de divan bas, aménagé en lit” (69).

the already sober prose and recreate the so-called ‘insert shots’ on the page, that is the brief static shots of environmental details which counterpoint a master shot and contribute to maintaining the spectators’ attention on the storyworld. Sometimes other brief insertions seem to repropose the *mise-en-scène* indications of screenplays (to quote but one example, “Le lac du bois de Boulogne. Un dimanche. Une belle journée de printemps”, 51). In *Film parlé*, these passages can be taken fundamentally as para-cinematic establishing shots. In its pitiful ending, having seen her mother in disgrace at a distance under the glowing lights of Willy’s Bar, Anne walks away with her baby daughter, and Némirovsky concludes the story through what Jost would describe as a primary internal ocularisation, a POV shot of the boulevard seen through crying eyes:

Le voix se sont tués. La rue est vide. Les petites lueurs, pauvres et rares, des réverbères vacillent et se dédoublent dans le brouillard d’hiver, entourées d’un halo léger, doré, tremblant comme les lumières qui brillent à travers des larmes. (85)

Throughout the narrative, such descriptive minimalism also produces the bare minimum background against which all visualisation stands out. In effect, it is in consideration of the narrative putting-into-relief that Némirovsky’s short story deserves critical attention. The present-tense narration here is totally foregrounded and utterly cinematic because the continuously changing images are funneled through such a tightened prose. There are no pauses in *Film parlé*; the storyworld always seems *in action*, as it were. A swirl of images informs the brisk representation; surfaces and lights run as if they were on celluloid film. Most interestingly, the narrative progression unfolds seamlessly. There is no use of typographic blank to space out the scenes; these are all back-to-back juxtaposed.

Némirovsky’s narrative technique would demand a challenging act of reading were it not for the plainness of the plot. The narrative contract that Némirovsky uses to engage the reader, starting from the title, is a fairly demanding one, as it calls for following a simple story

through an unfamiliar cinematic reading. The narrative technique deployed here is not merely that of the ‘camera eye’.¹⁸⁷ *Film parlé* probably features one of the most blatant cases of para-cinematic narrator. It is a short story where the reader perfectly feels that the act of recounting is totally performed with reference to the filmic narration (and not simply with reference to the camera). The literary narrator imitates the filmic and, consequently, the written text modulates the cinema by means of a distillation of the elemental features of the latter. In terms of genre, *Film parlé* displays an intense deployment of the cinematic mode and features most of the formal traits that support it.

5.3. Elio Vittorini, *Uomini e no*

Uomini e no (1945) has commonly been praised due to completely different reasons than its state of being a sort of cinema in words. Together with its writer it became the symbolic work of the Italian Resistance under Nazi-Fascism. Vittorini (1908-1966), a boisterous former left-wing fascist, had gradually broken with the Fascist intelligentsia as a consequence of their support of repression against the republicans in Spain in 1936. He continued to have an ambiguous ideological position before the regime in the years following, while his political militancy became increasingly compromised. Signs of those troubled times can be seen in the censorship of some parts of his *Il garofano rosso* (1948) and in the famed anthology *Americana*

¹⁸⁷ Compare with Jonathan Weiss’s simplifying claim: “the narrator is replaced by the eye of a camera, which records what it sees in a coldly objective fashion” (2007: 77).

(1941).¹⁸⁸ Vittorini moved from Florence to Milan in 1939 for his new job with Mondadori and Bompiani, as well as his desire to stay closer to his lover Ginetta Varisco, who was Giansiro Ferrata's wife at that time. When the Fascist regime collapsed in 1943, Vittorini joined the Milanese partisans. Thanks to his past experience in the publishing industry, he was charged with organising the clandestine communist press in the city. He was arrested on 26 July 1943 and set free in September; but he soon became a wanted man by the Nazi-Fascist police and was forced to go into hiding in the area of the Sacro Monte di Varese, where he wrote *Uomini e no*. He came back to Milan in February 1945 and, although he was never involved in military actions, he became a key person in the Milanese antifascist environment. The book was published in June 1945.¹⁸⁹

These few biographical notes constitute the personal and historical background of the fiction in *Uomini e no*, which describes partisan Enne 2's military actions and his frustrating

¹⁸⁸ *Il garofano rosso* was published in the journal 'Solaria' in 1933. Censors intervened in the seventh instalment and the publication was interrupted. Vittorini re-elaborated his text but soon abandoned the idea of a complete publication. This was accomplished only in 1948 and published with a long preface explaining the author's reasons. Regarding *Americana*, the proof copy of the anthology with the famed introduction by Vittorini was readied in 1940 and censored in 1941; another edition was prepared with a far less enthusiastic critical introduction by Emilio Cecchi in 1942. There are numerous critical studies discussing these editions and, in general, censorship during Fascism; see, at least, Bonsaver (2007, 2008).

¹⁸⁹ Critics have retraced Vittorini's biography in detail. Bonsaver pinpoints: "Non sembra però che sino al crollo del regime, nell'estate del 1943, Vittorini avesse trasformato la sua disillusione verso il fascismo in attiva collaborazione e adesione alle cellule antifasciste, sia in campo liberale, e cioè *Giustizia e libertà*, sia nelle file del *Partito Comunista Italiano*" (2008: 111). For an extensive account of Vittorini's life and work, see Raffaella Rodondi (1985), Anna Panicali (1994), Raffaele Crovi (1998), Guido Bonsaver (2000, 2008), Edoardo Esposito (2009, 2011), and Giuseppe Lupo (2011). All quotes from *Uomini e no* refer to the version of the text included in the 'Meridiani' Mondadori edition (Vittorini 1974), i.e. the 1965 Mondadori edition with 136 chapters. See Rodondi's 'Nota ai testi' (1210-26) for a discussion of the structural changes Vittorini made for the subsequent editions of the novel.

relationship with his lover Berta, a married woman, in the turmoil of wartime events.¹⁹⁰ The text seemingly shows no evidence whatsoever of cinematic reference; moreover, it appears that Vittorini has not left any specific assertions about a potential influence of cinema on his style, though he was certainly not indifferent to the seventh art. He wrote several film reviews in the Florentine journal ‘Il Bargello’ in the 1930s and explored the possibilities of visual culture in comics later, in ‘Il Politecnico’.¹⁹¹ Moreover, *Uomini e no* is not a simple chronicle of events but rather reiterates that blend of surreal and dreamlike atmosphere that had already been developed in Vittorini’s most famous novel *Conversazione in Sicilia* (1941), with its distinctive ‘linguaggio profetico’ (Panicali 1973; 1994) rich in allegories, symbolism and biblical overtones.¹⁹² Although the atmospheres in *Conversazione* may be compared to those of metaphysical painting, and particularly with Giorgio De Chirico’s,¹⁹³ and its structure was influenced by Shakespeare’s theatre and Thornton Wilder’s play *Our Town* (1938),¹⁹⁴ some important suggestions might have come to Vittorini from the film form as well. Static effects in

¹⁹⁰ See Esposito (2011: 99-120) for a discussion of the structural importance of this relationship and several critics’ misunderstanding in the past, who considered *Uomini e no* a bad imitation of Hemingway’s *For Whom the Bell Tolls* (1940). Esposito claims: “Non si è capito che la storia d’amore è ciò che introduce la considerazione dialetticamente inevitabile – e irrinunciabile per Vittorini – del rapporto tra individuale e pubblico, tra privato e politico” (114).

¹⁹¹ See Vittorini’s articles in *Letteratura arte e società* (Vittorini 2008a; Vittorini 2008b). See Annalisa Stancanelli (2008) on Vittorini and comics.

¹⁹² As Bonsaver points out (2008: 239), traces of ‘linguaggio profetico’ are already observable in Vittorini’s *Taccuino ’37* (2008: 98) and in his first writing of *Il garofano rosso*.

¹⁹³ Bonsaver (2008: 135) explains that “nei suoi scritti giornalistici, Vittorini si occupò più volte dei metafisici, e forse non è del tutto peregrino vedere perlomeno un parallelo tra questa scuola pittorica e la tecnica narrativa sviluppata da Vittorini nei tardi anni trenta. L’esempio qui riprodotto in copertina [De Chirico’s *Conversation Among the Ruins*] sembra riassumere in sé molte qualità distintive di *Conversazione in Sicilia*: la coesistenza di dettaglio realistico e ambientazione surreale; la connotazione simbolica dei personaggi; il desolato paesaggio mediterraneo e infine il titolo stesso del dipinto”. However, Bonsaver also warns that probably Vittorini did not know this specific painting as it was sold to an American collector in 1929.

¹⁹⁴ Ferrara (2014: 78-93) points to the importance of the ‘Stage Manager’ in Wilder and claims that “la tecnica e i contenuti del teatro wilderiano, e in particolare del dramma *Our Town*, influenzano la tecnica compositiva e il messaggio ‘suggellato’ di *Conversazione* in funzione eversiva rispetto alla tradizionale narrazione di tipo naturalista” (79). She also points out that the fifth part of *Conversazione* was heavily influenced by the third act of *Our Town*. In Wilder’s work, a dead character (Emily) comes back to relive her twelfth birthday; in *Conversazione* a series of references connect the death of Liborio with Silvestro and his mother.

cinema had already reached a milestone in Carl T. Dreyer, for example. In the 1970s Giovanni Falaschi (1998: 10) pointed out that “cinema, fotografia e letteratura trovano [...] una sistemazione all’interno della teoria artistica di Vittorini negli anni di *Conversazione*” and examined a number of para-cinematic features such as a certain use of montage and dissolve, or the interaction of silhouettes and black and white (“*Conversazione* è in grandissima parte un libro in bianco e nero”, 19).¹⁹⁵

In *Uomini e no*, most of the formal and stylistic features of *Conversazione in Sicilia* are resumed in a decisive refusal of naturalistic solutions: realistic details are loaded with symbolic meanings, so that Vittorini’s realism, like Cesare Pavese’s, is ambiguous and “impuro: il dato oggettivo è un punto di partenza e non d’approdo” (Falchetto, 1992: 46). However, much more than in *Conversazione*, the highly fragmented structure in *Uomini e no* combines with a rigorously scenic presentation of the events and a calibrated use of the *passato remoto*. Almost all of the 136 chapters, or sequences, in *Uomini e no* begin either in the *passato remoto*, or directly through a dialogue, or with an extremely short description or account in the *imperfetto*, which is immediately replaced by the perfect. The result is surprisingly cinematic, as Enrico Falqui (1961: 154) first noted in his review in 1945: “per un verso tiene del teatrale [...] e per l’altro verso si ricollega al cinematografico”. The fragmentation in short sequences may also reflect

¹⁹⁵ Other attempts to describe *Conversazione in Sicilia* as a novel featuring cinematic techniques have resulted in dubious criticism. To make but one example, while there is almost certainly a cinematic quality in the well-known sequences 5 and 6 (those on the train bound to Sicily describing the meeting with Coi Baffi and Senza Baffi), the ‘filmic’ does not seem to lie in the imitation of the shot/reverse shot, as Ivaldi claims (2011: 69). Yet the scene is actually articulated more interestingly: the two men (two plainclothes cops) are talking in the side aisle of the running train near a window, and the narrator Silvestro is able to see and listen to them first from his cabin; but then he can only eavesdrop on their conversation. At this point, he can ‘see’ them only through a mental cinema unfolding, as if the scene was recorded by a fixed camera, or as if a sort of freeze-frame shot fixed their positions a while before their dialogue unfolds. The moustache, in fact, is not their only characteristic described: “Io ritirai il capo dentro lo scompartimento ma rimasi in ascolto pensando, col variar delle voci, baritono e rauco, le due facce di loro, senza baffi, coi baffi” (583), where the ocularisation is prompted by the auricularisation, as Jost (1987) would put it (see Chapter 2). A similar solution is also observable in Morante’s *Aracoeli*, where a “voce grassa” and a “voce magra” alternate, more finely, through a synesthetic nexus (see below, 5.7).

the actual situation of emergency in which the book was composed, because Vittorini wrote “su foglietti che mano a mano nascondeva sotto le assi del pavimento” (Bonsaver, 2008: 113).

Yet, the final structure cannot solely derive from such a contingency. The subdivision in short textual portions, on the other hand, recurs systematically in Vittorini’s works.

In *Uomini e no*, the narration is famously organised into two narrative lines, which I simply refer to as narrative line ‘A’, narrated in the past tenses; and narrative line ‘B’, which is italicised and narrated in the present. In line A, most of the sequences are in the third person and external focalisation; the sequences in line B regularly overturn this narrative organisation, introducing the point of view of the narrator ‘in dialogue’, so to speak, with the protagonist. The first effect of this two-fold narration is essentially a breach between the intradiegetic and extradiegetic levels (Bonsaver, 2008: 143).¹⁹⁶ However, the parallel narrative in italics gradually converges until it overlaps with the other. Therefore, the initial estrangement-effect provoked by this ‘breach’¹⁹⁷ in the first lines of sequence 18 is gradually re-absorbed, and the two-fold embodiment of the narrator is instead revealed as a sort of doppelganger in sequence 54:

XVII.

L'uomo chiamato Enne 2 è nella sua camera. Egli è steso sul letto, fuma, e io non riesco a non recarmi da lui. Da dieci anni voglio scrivere di lui, raccontare della cosa che c'è da dieci anni tra una donna e lui, e appena sono solo nella mia camera, steso sul mio letto, il mio pensiero va a lui, e mi tocca alzarmi e correre da lui.

‘Sono qui’ gli dico ‘Enne 2’. (735)

LIV.

¹⁹⁶ Ferrara (2014: 93-7) links the italicised sequences to Vittorini’s *Atto Primo* (1973) and to Wilder’s *Our Town*, because of the protagonists’ regression to childhood and the role of the Stage Manager (in Vittorini, the extradiegetic narrator). See also Lupo (2011: 105-23) about Raffaele Crovi and Enrico Vaime’s theatrical version of *Uomini e no*, which is mainly based on its italicised sequences.

¹⁹⁷ A metalepsis in Genette’s terms. Metalepsis is the figure that allows the narrator (or the author) to create a breach, as it were, in the diegetic levels of narrative discourse, by commenting and manipulating the story, thereby exhibiting him or herself to various degrees (Genette, 1972: 243-5; 1980: 234-7).

Io a volte non so, quando quest'uomo è solo – chiuso nel buio in una sua stanza, steso su un letto, uomo al mondo lui solo – io quasi non so s'io non sono, invece del suo scrittore, lui stesso.

Ma, s'io scrivo di lui, non è per lui stesso; è per qualcosa che ho capito e debbo far conoscere; e io l'ho capita; io l'ho; e io, non lui, la dico. (789)

The overlapping of narrative lines ‘A’ and ‘B’ takes place immediately after the middle of the book. The italicised sequences 76-78 directly join up with the continuity of the chronicle ‘A’ and focus on Berta, standing in shock in front of the civilians shot dead in retaliation between Largo Augusto and Piazza Cinque Giornate. Thus, the narrative line ‘B’ interrupts the thrilling scene of the old man running towards the tanks described from Enne 2’s uneasy vantage point. It is worth noting that this scene is already fully-cinematically organised for a highly dramatic effect. While looking at the old man, Enne 2 notes Berta, who in turn is staring at the dead in the other direction. Thus, line ‘B’ freezes the action and a sort of voice-over refers her thoughts as well as her surreal dialogue with the dead on the pavement. The three italicised sequences show no single gesture or body movement by Berta; only the five dead in the sun seem to reply “con un cenno del capo” (828). The figures ‘on the scene’ are petrified.

The merging of the oniric line ‘B’ with storyline ‘A’ sharpens in sequence 104, where Hitler is mentioned jointly with the fictional fascists, Nazis and their dogs. Here the narration becomes an effective extradiegetic commentary on the story, with the same function that voice-over takes on in many films. However, consider that the extradiegetic narrator merges with Enne 2 (“*Un corno, dice mia nonna*”, 882). Thus, the overlapping of narrative lines ‘A’ and ‘B’ begins immediately after the middle of the book and persists until the end. Clearly, this two-fold narrative thread serves as an account of the troubles of a man split between acting and reflecting during the horror of the war. The thrilling close of the storyline (A+B) reaches its climax with the suspense in sequence 128, where an *operaio* leaves Enne 2 in bed with two guns in his hands. The last lines of sequence 131 blend all the meta-fictionality expressed thus far:

[Berta] È sulle tue ginocchia' gli dico.

Egli siede, siede lei sulle ginocchia; e nessuna cosa del mondo è una cosa sola. Anche la notte fuori dai vetri non è una cosa sola; è tutte le notti. E Cane Nero, quando entra, è tutti i cani che sono stati, è nella Bibbia e in ogni storia antica, in Macbeth e Amleto, in Shakespeare e nel giornale d'oggi.

Ma lui di sette anni, io lo porto via. Non altro rimane, nella stanza, che un ordigno di morte: con due pistole in mano. (913)

In the final sequences 132-136 the connection is provided by another *operaio* in action so that the narrative focus is switched to the protagonist's fellows. The ending of the novel is fully-cinematic. A band of partisans come across some fascists riding a side-car and a motorbike and offer the worker an opportunity to shoot them on the road from Pavia to Milan in order to practice with the gun. However, having successfully accomplished part of his 'training', when he arrives at a bar, the man spares a lonely young German soldier: "Era troppo triste" he explains to his fellows before heading for Milan: "Sembrava un operaio". And the final scene could not be more appropriate, with the short dialogue in the lorry counterpointed by environmental references:

Si avvicinavano a Milano. C'erano terrapieni di ferrovia, cartelli pubblicitari d'altri tempi, sotopassaggi, incroci di strade, e sempre il freddo sulla pianura, la nebbia lieve.

'Imparerò meglio' disse l'*operaio*. (920)

The oniric and meta-fictional sequences in the present tense in line 'B' also include some passages, which may well be considered as cinematic dissolves, where no comment is made about the change of location. Therefore, the reader has to make inferences based on the prompt of visual inputs. Consider this direct connection from the room where the conversation has been unfolding to the garden evoked by Enne 2:

XX.

La sua sigaretta si era spenta, e se la riaccende. Lancia lontano il fiammifero.

'Che sai' io gli chiedo 'che sai della sua infanzia che lei ti abbia raccontato?'

'So che abitava in campagna' mi risponde. 'In mezzo a un giardino'.

Entriamo in un giardino.

‘Questi grandi alberi?’ gli chiedo. (373)

This is an implicit dissolve of two backgrounds within the continuity of the dialogue. The reverse process is observable in sequence 21, where the protagonist turns into a child while the place remains the same, a little wall in the garden where his adult person and the narrator were sitting:

XXI.

To scendo’ egli dice.

‘Scendi’.

È un bambino di sette anni che scivola giù dal muro.

‘Sei buffo’ io gli dico.

‘Perchè?’ dice il bambino. (738)

Such dissolves are replicated later on in sequence 54: “*Ma egli è di già nella sua infanzia. È di dieci anni. [...] Entriamo in un piccolo cortile*” (789); to which sequence 55 follows: “*Usciamo, e non è più il piccolo cortile nella luna: è la Sicilia*” (790). Sequence 58 shows the embedding of an image that had already been evoked: “*E nell’erba che il cavallo apre brucando, muovendo passi e brucando, vediamo la cassa della morta in collegio*” (797). These passages seem to recall cinematic experimentations such as Luis Buñuel’s *Un chien andalou* (1929). Another surreal scene in line ‘B’ shows a certain playfulness and reveals the meta-fictional operation with the usual focus on gazes:

LVI.

La nonna brontola sul balcone; la madre raccoglie e serra in un lenzuolo la biancheria che porta a lavare.

‘Vado’ dice ‘al torrente’.

S’avia, passa tra i fichidindia vicino al figlio di dieci anni, e lui e Berta vedono chi li vede. (794)

As is immediately observable, the present tense used in line ‘B’ conjoins with the *passato remoto* in line ‘A’ by virtue of the foregrounding effect provided by the verbs. Moreover, beyond the tense configuration that contributes to foregrounding the narrative, line ‘A’ shows a significant use of para-cinematic techniques as well. These techniques are regularly deployed in the unfolding of the scenes. Cross-cutting, for example, appears when an excess of suspense

is needed. Sequences 30 to 53 describe the partisans' preparation and the attack at the court, and show multiple passages linked together by means of parallel montage. In these sequences, the narrator also indulges in the recount of seemingly trivial and worthless details to raise the tension. Thus, the action erupts, having been meticulously prepared. Similarly, moving toward the ending, sequences 119-122 alternate the tobacconist's tip-off to the police with the protagonist being warned by three loyal workers.

However, the fragmentation in line 'A' quite often does not hinge on changes of location. On the contrary, the interruption of the blank space normally intervenes in the continuity of the scenes, thereby deliberately breaking their unfolding. This contributes to the sensation of discontinuous editing. If it were not anachronistic, one could draw an analogy with filmic 'jump cuts'. In fact, these cuts, when not separating different scenes, re-direct our visualisation to slightly different vantage points, thereby prompting small changes to visual angles and framing; moreover, these suspensions can also be seen as micro-cliffhangers¹⁹⁸ where a sufficient amount of narrative 'weight' is loaded and immediately resolved. The 'discontinuous continuity' that Cohen observed in cinematic fiction is an evident aspect in *Uomini e no*.

Overall, in such a syntagma of sequences, it is possible to see the joint action of a filmographic monstrator and a filmographic narrator (see Chapter 2) as diegetic functions that are remediated by the literary narrator to 'make the reader see' the story. As a result of the foregrounding effect provided by the perfect and the present tense, the whole narrative is flattened and tends to be cinematic. Moreover, the shortened segmentation of the scenes in *Uomini e no* functions as a narrative device to regulate the rhythm and the narrative tension. Hence, the cinematic mode informs the novel in that the literary narrator imitates the filmic,

¹⁹⁸ As a plot device, a cliffhanger is a stopping point calculated to leave the character in a precarious situation or dilemma, or used to leave the story momentarily unresolved, in order to create suspense in the recipient.

thereby modifying the narrative contract with the reader who is called to visualise the events ‘as if’ watching a film. Ultimately, beyond Vittorini’s lyricism, the peculiar blend of composure and solemnity in the chronicle of wartime events, as well as the protagonist’s sentimental anguish, are strengthened by such a narrative solution.

The result of the combination of these textual features is a para-cinematic narrative that does not prevent Vittorini from reproposing and reshaping his own original style, which he had already expressed in *Conversazione in Sicilia*. As a consequence, the narration is both imbued with meta-narrative cues and supported by a meta-literary tension: this meta-fictionality reflects one side of Vittorini’s experimentalism, which is completed by his effort to modernise the Italian prose fiction of the time that was so burdened by tired and stereotyped hyper-literary solutions, especially concerning dialogue.¹⁹⁹ Similarly to Pavese, the turn in Vittorini’s style was notoriously brought about by the mediation of contemporary American literature from the 1930s (in particular, Ernest Hemingway, William Faulkner, Ring Lardner, William Saroyan, John Steinbeck, James M. Cain and Erskine Caldwell).²⁰⁰ However, the interplay of a number of artistic influences came together in shaping Vittorini’s imagination. As he later declared: “per ‘Il Politecnico’, io ebbi il mio punto di partenza nell’*Americana* e per

¹⁹⁹ As Vittorini puts it in the opening article of the newly-founded *American Quarterly* in 1949: “So oratorical, so essayistic, so intellectual though modern, was the language in which the best writers wrote that a line of dialogue, for instance, would find a place therein only if precious in itself, or evocative or at least of coloristic value, and would be buried in an argumentation that served as a comment on it. One didn’t write ‘he said’, or ‘she said’, but something like this: ‘In a long whispering that seemed like the cheek of a cloud come from the farthest horizons of their infancy, he enveloped her in the following words...’” (1949: 5)

²⁰⁰ The author talks of his own translation practice as well when he explains: “What American writers? Hemingway, Faulkner, Ring Lardner, Saroyan, Steinbeck, Cain and Erskine Caldwell. [...] But it was on Hemingway that the attention of our young man was fixed, and on some of the functional qualities which all the Americans, independent of their artistic stature, seemed to have in common. However, the translator gave the same rhythmical measure, always very elevated, to all prose writers, both major and minor. It was as if it were translating from a single writer who was now more slow, now more rapid; now more plastic, now more linear; now more vigorous, now more flaccid; now more simple, now more complex” (Vittorini, 1949: 6). These claims have been put in perspective: it is not true that Vittorini modified so much the style of the writers he had been translating with the help of Lucia Rodocanachi (cf. Bonsaver, 1998).

l'*Americana* lo ebbi nel cinematografo, fuori dai libri e dai giornali” (Vittorini, 2008b: 701). In effect, the influence of American cinema was very common at that time (young Calvino, among others, would be an enthusiast cinemagoer, see Chapter 6). In a review of Vittorini’s *Americana*, published posthumously in the journal ‘Aretusa’ in 1945, Giaime Pintor emphasised the connection between the American myth and the cultural needs of his generation, adding:

Allora il cinema entrò nella nostra vita come una presenza insostituibile; cresciuto con la nostra stessa giovinezza ci insegnò a vedere e a comporre secondo nuove misure, modificò la storia e la geografia dei nostri cervelli, fu insieme scuola e polemica, divertimento e mitologia. (Falcetto, 1992: 36)

As Gesualdo Bufalino also observed:

Si è tanto detto di *Americana* e di come aprì gli occhi ai giovani ciechi che per tanto tempo noi fummo. Ma il cinema venne prima e contò di più. Forse lo stesso Vittorini, prima che nei libri di Faulkner e di Saroyan, di Hemingway e di Steinbeck scoprì l’America sullo schermo, da una baracca di periferia, al prezzo di una lira al biglietto. (Gesù, 1992: 10)

The repeated mention of these authors is particularly significant. American and French critics began comparing Hemingway’s style especially to the cinema from the mid-1930s.²⁰¹ It is known that Hemingway, however, influenced Vittorini later than other American authors; as Guido Bonsaver points out, it is on Saroyan’s prose that Vittorini seems to have found “il

²⁰¹ According to a French reviewer of *A Farewell to Arms*, Hemingway was “a man who is at once a camera and a phonograph” (Meyers, 1982: 149); Wyndham Lewis, irritated by Hemingway’s writing, spitefully observed in 1934 that such style is “*a cinema in words*” (1987: 33). David Seed explains that “since these early views it has become routine for critics to praise Hemingway’s visual immediacy” (2012: 68). Following Seed’s analysis only randomly here, these cinematic traits are found in Hemingway: the limitation of the observer’s visual field; the use of cross-cutting; the alternations of long shots and close-ups, shot/reverse shots, panning shots, slow motion; the importance of gestures, lighting effects, multiperspectivism; the fragmentation of syntax; and, of course, the articulation of a minimalist dialogue. In effect, Hemingway champions Conrad’s claim to ‘make the reader see’ and thinks of textual clarity in visual terms. He described his own approach as follows in 1935: “write it down making it clear so the reader will see it too” (Hemingway, 1980: 212); in a later interview he claimed that the novelist “writes to be read by the eye” (Brucoli, 1986: 120).

modello stilistico con il quale emancipare la sua opera da una tecnica narrativa piuttosto naturalistica” (2008: 126); nonetheless, Hemingway’s cinematic style seems to have partly passed to Vittorini.

Critics have often spoken of Vittorini’s style in *Uomini e no* as an integration of what was already set in *Conversazione in Sicilia* and have minimised the narrative outcomes of the novel of 1945; moreover, some have pointed out that the story is too affected by the author’s personal vicissitudes in real life, and loses part of its potentially universal message. Vittorini himself was not satisfied with the text and modified it several times in the following editions. In the preface to the first edition of *Il garofano rosso*, he ungenerously affirmed that *Uomini e no* was “quasi la stessa solfa” compared to *Conversazione* (Vittorini, 1974: 443).²⁰² However, considering the impact of film culture on American literature, as well as the impact of American literature on Vittorini’s mindset and literary practice, a brighter light may be shed on *Uomini e no*. In fact, as Maria Corti put it “Vittorini semina in ciascuna [sua opera] qualcosa che raccoglierà in un’altra, a livello sia tematico sia delle forme” (1974: XXX). But then, crucially, it is the cinematic quality only suffused in *Conversazione* that emerges in *Uomini e no* as a cinematic mode pervading the narration throughout. Having shifted the analytical perspective, through the consideration of such an indirect and implicit intermedial reference, the value of the novel paradoxically stands out in this respect and even in relation to Vittorini’s long-discussed inability to build wide and complex narratives, his “refrattarietà all’impianto complesso dall’elaborato tessuto connettivo” (Corti, 1974: XXXIII). The elaborate connective passages,

²⁰² Later, in *Le due tensioni* Vittorini also wrote about “un’integrazione frammentaria di *Conversazione in Sicilia* [...] che non coinvolge tuttavia il senso e il disegno dell’intero libro, rimasto a sé, e nel suo sé inferiore” (Vittorini, 1967: 67). See Corti (1974: XLI): “L’ibridismo di *Uomini e no*, che ne fa un ponte fra *Conversazione* e il *Sempione*, traspare a livello del contenuto e di forma dell’espressione, in quanto a entrambi i piani lo scrittore non sa decidersi fra l’istanza storico-realistica e quella di un’esemplarità della vicenda e del personaggio”; and, recently, Bonsaver (2008: 150): “una sostanziale disorganicità strutturale e stilistica”.

which are typical of long-form novels, in *Uomini e no* are substituted by a cinema-derived syntagmatic of sequences, i.e. by montage. Ultimately, it is a process of modification that would result in the later narrative experiment of *Le città del mondo*, another unfinished creative effort that was drawn out for years.²⁰³ It is rather curious that Corti sees in Vittorini's latter work “il suo più bel romanzo” (XXXIV) without acknowledging that the para-cinematic form was already in *Uomini e no*, which is instead lessened for his hybridism of historical and personal vicissitudes.

Now, if there was indeed hybridism in *Uomini e no*, it was between cinema and literature. Moreover, the cinematic mode guarantees the narrative a certain coherence and consistency. The recognition of the deep interplay between Vittorini's need to shape a new literature and the lesson of the American authors must account for the fact that the Americans had already been well infused with film culture. Thus, without overturning other considerations on a novel whose significance has been thoroughly established by critics, I suggest that *Uomini e no* also has to be assessed as the product of, at least, an indirect influence of the cinematic form that passed through beloved American authors to Vittorini. In addition to that, it is plausible that direct filmic suggestions had gradually or unconsciously operated on him even after a number of years. It is a process of remediation that links with the situation in France in the 1930s and 1940s, as described by Magny in her already-mentioned seminal study, as well as with the “extensive unconscious influence on modernist writing”, as Andrew Shail claims (2012a: 36).

In general, the misrecognition of the ‘filmic’ in *Uomini e no*, even *a posteriori* by the author, might be explained by the fact that drawing such a link between the two arts was untimely in Italy in those years, since a certain criticism on the value of cinema as an art and persisting diffidence towards cinema as an industry were still very common. Even though he appreciated

²⁰³ *Le città del mondo* was conceived from 1952 to 1955 and two books were published posthumously, first in 1969 and, with the subtitle ‘una sceneggiatura’, in 1975 (Vittorini 1975; Vittorini 1969).

some foreign filmmakers and extolled cinema as the art of movement and dynamism, it seems Vittorini did not consider cinema as a fully-fledged art yet in the 1930s and 1940s. Photographic realism disturbed him since he perceived it as merely documentary.²⁰⁴ Falaschi (1998: 22) observed that in Vittorini's 1936 review of Rouben Mamoulian's film *Becky Sharp* (1935), the first movie in the three-strip Technicolor process, "la superiorità della letteratura era per Vittorini cosa certa". Still, in an interview released in 1949, Vittorini claimed that he had been going to the cinema only to relax or have fun and because he was interested in its rituality. Regarding the status of cinema, he also replied "nel suo campo e nel suo genere il cinema non ha ancora raggiunto né il melodramma né il romanzo nei loro generi, e nel loro tempo". However, when asked if cinema had had an influence on literature, he admitted (still rather cautiously, note the phrasing): "indirettamente sì [...] perché ho osservato che il cinema influenza, e parecchio, la vita degli uomini che lo frequentano; cosicché uno scrittore subisce l'influenza del cinema attraverso la vita degli uomini che egli osserva e con cui vive" (G.C.V., 1949: 300).²⁰⁵

On the other hand, it is not surprising that Vittorini, who was so imbued with Croce's aesthetics as well as many critics and writers of the same generation, could not fully acknowledge or confess the subtle influence of the film form. Doing so would have probably clashed with his concept of beauty in literature, which was determined fundamentally by the

²⁰⁴ In this, Vittorini retains ideas that had already been shared during the debate about novel and objectivity in the 1930s. See Bruno Falchetto (1992) for a more detailed account of this period. See Lupo (2011: 61-78) about Vittorini's ideas on painting, photography and cinema.

²⁰⁵ Similar claims were made in the 1910s by Boccioni, and in the 1920s by Blaise Cendrars and the young Surrealist writer Robert Desnos (cf. Andreazza 2008: 135). See Vittorini's other articles relating to these years in *Letteratura arte e società* (Vittorini 2008a; Vittorini 2008b).

dichotomy *poesia/non poesia* (that is almost to say art/non-art).²⁰⁶ In the already-mentioned preface to the first edition of *Il garofano rosso*, as well as in other pieces of his writing, the two terms for comparison repeatedly appear. Interestingly, the term *poesia* is attributed to the style of contemporary American authors. These authors have “un’inclinazione di massa a riscuotere il romanzo dall’intellettualismo e ricondurlo a sottovento della poesia” (Vittorini, 1974: 438) thanks to the content and immediacy of their narratives, which appear unburdened overall by those literary paraphernalia Vittorini aimed to leave behind, especially the cult of beauty typical of the *prosa d’arte* and Ermetism.²⁰⁷ Ultimately, it seems that at the turn of the 30s and well into the 40s, the writer had been unconsciously influenced by the film form and could only deal with it via the aesthetic categories he applied to art in general. Moreover, Vittorini picked up the cinematic style from American writers whilst learning from their style.

To conclude, *Uomini e no* is not merely a film in words, nor is it a sort of screenplay. On the contrary, it is foremost a novel where an additional quality is implied: the filmic. Therefore, it provides further evidence that, being absorbed as a new mindset, a modern sensibility, and an inescapable reference of contemporary culture, the cinema has been integrated consciously or unconsciously, directly or indirectly into literary texts. Despite being quite distant from straight para-cinematic narratives such as Hammett’s *The Maltese Falcon*, *Uomini e no* nonetheless sits as an instance of cinematic mode in fiction: more specifically, in terms of

²⁰⁶ Andreazza (2008: 68-72, 146-52) points out that a similar aversion for the material and visual element of film had already oriented the stances of other writers with an idealist background such as Giuseppe Prezzolini, Pietro Gobetti and Antonio Gramsci, who considered cinema a popular means of entertainment. Croce’s aesthetics would remain a key point of reference for writers discussing or reviewing films in the new literary journals of the 1920s, such as *Il Baretti*, *Il Convegno*, *La Fiera Letteraria*, *900*, and *Solaria*.

²⁰⁷ During the 1930s in Italy the superiority of poetry over other literary genres was undisputed. As Falchetto (1992: 18) points out, the production of novels and short stories in those years, while opening new literary horizons, was contradicted by a substantial “ipoteca letteraria”.

intermedial reference, it reveals an implicit formal imitation of the cinema with moderate intensity.

5.4. Alain Robbe-Grillet, *La Jalousie*

Alain Robbe-Grillet's (1922-2008) third published novel, *La Jalousie*, appeared in 1957. Although it sold less than a thousand copies that year, this classic example of *nouveau roman* rapidly became a long-seller and one of the most striking instances quoted in relation to the cinema.²⁰⁸ Set in a colonial house surrounded by banana plantations, the storyline is fragmented into nine untitled chapters revolving around the jealousy of a husband (the narrator) of the supposed intimacy between his wife, A..., and Franck, the owner of a neighbouring plantation. The husband spies on her and is obsessed by their behaviour when Franck is around. His suspicions are revived by the fact that Franck's wife, Christiane, for some reason, no longer accompanies him on visits. When Franck announces that he is driving down to the port to arrange for a purchase of a new lorry, A... suggests that she accompanies him to do some errands. They set out at dawn, so as to return the same night; however, they will not return until the following day. During the days preceding this journey, and all the time he is left alone, the husband obsessively seeks some incriminating evidence. When A... and Franck fail to return, he fantasises about a night of sex or their death by accident. The

²⁰⁸ Robbe-Grillet claimed (1963: 7): "Mes roman n'ont pas été accueillis, lors de leur parution, avec un chaleur unanime; c'est le moins que l'on puisse dire". For a preliminary definition of the *nouveau roman* and the *école du regard* see Robbe-Grillet's essays collected in *Pour un nouveau roman* (1963). Among the many scholars who have focused on the author see, in particular, Bruce Morrisette (1963), also for the connection with the cinema (1985). For an example of the immediate reception of *La Jalousie* as a cinematic novel, see Colette Audry (1958). For a recent account on the *nouveau roman*, see Franz Johansson (2010). I quote from the French edition (Robbe-Grillet 1957).

presumed lovers, however, return the next day and reassure the man they spent the night in a hotel because Franck's car had broken down.

The narrative clearly exploits the ultra-conventional pattern of the love triangle while subverting the traditional narrative structures. Following the line traced by Kafka and Beckett, Robbe-Grillet challenges the ‘expired’ notion of the character with a clear physiognomy and sociocultural background, as well as the limits of the ‘traditional’ novel embodied by Balzac, because “le roman de personnages appartient bel et bien au passé, il caractérise une époque: celle qui marqua l’apogée de l’individu” (Robbe-Grillet, 1963: 28). Therefore, the novel is based on one fundamental ‘rule’: the narrator never uses deictics such as ‘I’ or ‘me’; he only gradually delineates himself as an intradiegetic eye peering at his wife’s and Franck’s gestures, following their gazes, and listening or eavesdropping on their conversations. The narrative focuses on daily-life and negligible situations that normally do not enter the plot of novels: marginal and apparently nonsensical details are described in a general atmosphere that disorients the reader from the first pages.²⁰⁹ Before being overcharged by further meanings, characters *are there*, like any other object, animal or the house’s *décor* (cf. “Autour de nous [...] les choses *sont là*”, Robbe-Grillet, 1963: 18); however, because of the ambiguity of the impersonal narration, the narrator never reveals a deeper *profondeur* of their gestures or attitudes, nor does he explore their psychology or background, if not in passing.²¹⁰ The

²⁰⁹ This is a typical feature of Robbe-Grillet’s first novels. Henry Micciollo (1972: 11) recalls the absence of enthusiasm in readers and critics in those years: “Impression d’étrangeté, de malaise devant un univers d’où l’homme semble exclu et qui exige du lecteur un bouleversement complet de ses habitudes de lecture; pas des personnage bien campés, pas d’histoire suivie, pas même de signification bien visible: le lecteur ne sait plus à quoi se raccrocher, bientôt il est perdu”.

²¹⁰ Jean-Pierre Vidal (1973: 21) claims that the novel aims to “transformer en surfaces [...] ce qui était donné comme profondeur”; André-Alain Morello (2010: 103) points out that the novel is only ambiguously “exemplaire du combat contre le mythe de la profondeur” because, on the other hand, the husband’s consciousness is illuminated; other critics in fact have seen “a remarkable psychological novel” (Fletcher, 1983: 45).

presence of the husband and his direct questions have to be inferred by replies and gestures.²¹¹

He himself is a presence-absence, a *je-néant* (Morissette, 1985: 170) who never refers to his thinking and only describes surfaces and external events, introducing the environments and characters with descriptions that ‘estrangle’ the storyworld (in the very sense given by the Russian formalists).²¹² When A... is initially represented inside her room, the reader understands the description is offered from the point of view of a person peeping at her from the terrace through the window’s slatted shutters. The title of the novel, in fact, alludes to a French pun, because *jalousie* is also a common word for Venetian blinds.²¹³

The New Novel aims at a “nouveau réalisme” (Robbe-Grillet, 1963: 13), and at making the storyworld visible (“Et voici que maintenant on *voit* la chaise, le mouvement de la main”, 1963: 19). However, the goal of this *école du regard* is not simply the “roman objectif”: the writer immediately warned against the limits of objectivity, since “L’objectivité au sens courant du terme – impersonnalité totale du regard – est trop évidemment une chimère” (18). As a matter of fact, as André-Alain Morello also emphasises (2010: 78-9), *La Jalousie* is a novel made of a series of tensions (e.g., presence/absence; light/shadow; black(s)/white(s); figures/phantoms) and grounded in autobiography (Robbe-Grillet was an engineer-agronomist and lived for a period in Martinique) as well as in parody – a parody of the ‘traditional’ novel in general, and

²¹¹ For example, a question to the servant is posed in these terms: “A une question peu précise concernant le moment où il a reçu cet ordre, il répond: ‘Maintenant’” (Robbe-Grillet, 1957: 50). In another passage A. and Franck are talking about a novel he has lent her; the husband is excluded from the conversation, so he tries to interrupt it: “Le moment est venu de s’intéresser à la santé de Christiane. Franck répond par un geste de la main” (54).

²¹² *Je-néant* effectively describes the psychological condition of the husband and the narratorial situation. Compare with other fluctuating interpretations: Benral (1964: 167) claims that “c’est un roman qui n’est raconté ni à la première ni à la troisième personne”; John Fletcher (1983: 41) speaks of “third person”.

²¹³ Slatted shutters are also found in Robbe-Grillet’s later film *L’immortelle* (1963). In the film, set in Istanbul, the lover observes the street in front of his house to see if the woman he loves is coming to visit him. As Fletcher (1983: 41) points out, “Venetian blinds give him, and the lover in *The Immortal One*, an uneasy sense of security and yet also a voyeuristic feeling of guilt. In this sense, of course, *Jealousy* takes up where *The Voyeur* left off: the narrator and the voyeur are now one”.

more particularly of the detective and the colonial novel.²¹⁴ The greatest and clear-cut tension is, however, embodied by the husband-narrator. In fact, the suppression of the ‘I’ does not suppress the subject who remains unmentioned. Such tensions are also developed with reference to the film medium. As Robbe-Grillet explained (1963: 128): “L’attrait certain que la création cinématographique exerce sur beaucoup de nouveaux romanciers doit, lui, être cherché ailleurs. Ce n’est pas l’objectivité de la caméra qui les passionne, mais ses possibilités dans le domaine du subjectif, de l’imaginaire”. Therefore, the narrative situation in *La Jalousie* is quite a peculiar one, due to the interaction between external focalisation and subjectivity. Henry Micciollo (1972: 44) claims that “le narrateur représente le triomphe d’une subjectivité totale”. The paradoxical gaze, seen earlier in a character such as Serafino Gubbio, is here taken to extreme.

The ‘live’ account of the events is rigorously maintained due to the present tense. Consequently, descriptions themselves take on a scenic temporality: i.e., the narration is not conventionally ‘interrupted’, as in the traditional novel challenged by the author, but continues flowing. The present tense of *La Jalousie* seems to represent the husband’s consciousness and is counterpointed from the beginning by numerous *maintenant*, and seemingly conveys the ‘here-and-now’ of the story. Jean-Pierre Vidal (1973: 72) observes that “le nombreux *maintenant* qui ponctuent le texte de leur ambiguïté sont fondamentalement des adverbes de lieu”. The entire novel can be seen either as an uninterrupted description or a

²¹⁴ On this topic, see Jean-Pierre Vidal (1973: 49) and Jacques Leenhardt (1973: 47), who also points out that, in *La Jalousie*, insects are focused on instead of the big animals that appear in much colonial narrative (71-2).

continuous action, because the storyworld is conveyed with an impression of simultaneity on a visual level.²¹⁵

However, different temporal planes actually blur the linearity of the plot: past happenings intersect with the transient present of the narrator's perception; recurring motifs thereby circulate and engulf the narrative foreground. A range of situations are added up and repeated with variations, as in a musical counterpoint: the aperitif on the terrace; A...’s head at the car window while greeting Franck; the journey to the city; the discussion about the African novel that A... has borrowed from Franck;²¹⁶ the millipede mashed up on the dining-room wall; the gecko; and so on. Some of these clearly occur once in the story and are re-expressed several times (all references to the millipede mashed up on the wall); some are arguably recurrent (Franck’s coming and going to the house); and others are left in ambiguity (how many drinks are served on the terrace?). As a consequence, the very simple storyline is far from being linear. On the contrary, it is entirely based on the ambiguous repetition of diegetic events, in a dizzying *mise en abyme* that persists chapter by chapter, so the reader is left undecided about their frequency and cause-effect relation. A linear reconstruction of the key events reviving the husband’s obsession would give: A... writing a letter, the ice episode, the discussion about the journey, the journey itself, the return of A... and Franck, and Franck’s behaviour.

The manifest scattering of the narrative sequencing foreshadows the anti-narrative structure that will be found in a film such as Alain Resnais’s *L’Année dernière à Marienbad* (1961),

²¹⁵ See also other critics: “La suppression de ‘l’avant’ et de ‘l’après’ oblige le roman à se tenir dans le ‘maintenant’. [...] Il ne s’agit pas de ce présent artificiel utilisé pour actualiser un récit que l’on sait au passé, mais d’un vrai qui exprime la réalité immédiate, l’événement qui surgit” (Micciollo, 1972: 35-6). The present tense “confond passé, présent et futur parce qu’ils se résolvent dans la continuité du temps intérieur, du flux de conscience” (Allemand, 1997: 78).

²¹⁶ A. and Franck are engrossed in the plot and the characters of this African novel; their naïve reading represents the narrator’s (and the author’s) meta-literary polemical object. Because of the reading approach it requires, *La Jalousie* may be seen as its counter-model.

whose screenplay was written by the same Robbe-Grillet. The film retrospectively constitutes a good visual reference for understanding how a series of motifs are varied in *La Jalousie*. Moreover, the text also draws on musical patterns: Micciollo (1972: 28) points out that these recurrent situations “ne servent pas à suivre la progression logique de l'intrigue, elles indiquent plutôt des tonalités, à la manière des mouvements d'une symphonie”. As other critics have pointed out (cf. Migeot, 1999: 87-8), the narration therefore seems a-chronological (the beginning, too, is difficult to situate in time), and proceeds by imperceptible shifts and leaps back and forward on the prompt of visual details: a shadow has moved, or the sun has disappeared behind a rock. Back-to-back short paragraphs describe seemingly unrelated actions, which evidently retain a connection in the mind of the jealous narrator (e.g., A... writes a letter, A... talks with the cook, A... reads the novel, all in less than two pages). The husband's jealousy is never discussed or analysed but emerges from the morbid attention reserved for the presumed lovers.²¹⁷ The actual ‘discontinuous continuity’ of the narration is all based on visual and auditory elements (e.g., crickets, birds, the car engine, the indigenous chant). In chapter seven, a crackle links the sound produced by the millipede, the comb running down A's hair, and the sound of the car that is imagined in flames at a distance in the bush (99-100).

Since the narration is based from the outset on such an ambiguous *regard* (prompted by auricularisations as well), the text seems to imitate a sequence of POV shots of surfaces, bodies and objects (a corner in the shadow; A... in her bedroom; some panoramic views of the plantations and the only road that surrounds the house) from fixed positions. When the narrator walks inside the house, he enacts a few ‘camera-movements’ that are to be inferred on the basis of what he describes seamlessly (within the chapters there are no blank spaces):

²¹⁷ It has been noted that the ‘vocabulary’ of passion and jealousy is completely avoided (Allemand, 1997: 74). On the contrary, the lexicon of architecture and, particularly, of geometry is extremely rich.

“Les chaussures légères à semelles de caoutchouc ne font aucun bruit sur le carrelage du couloir. Le battant de la porte tourne sans grincer sur ses gonds. Le sol du bureau est carrelé, lui aussi. Les trois fenêtres sont fermées et leurs jalousies n’ont été qu’entrouvertes” (48-9). In other passages, the husband’s gaze on the plantations is stimulated by that of his wife: “A..., pour mieux écouter, a tourné la tête vers la fenêtre ouverte, à côté d’elle. Dans le fond du vallon, des manœuvres sont en train de réparer le pont de rondins qui franchit le petit ruisseau” (102). However, more often, the apparently pointless, extenuating, and recurrent descriptions of the banana plantations and surroundings from afar gain a precise function because of the subjective bias that informs the objectivity of the narration: these seemingly inexplicable enumerations and geometric descriptions are actually the husband’s internal ocularisations, signalling that he is trying to distract his mind by looking outside the house (cf. also Bernal, 1964: 224). In this “roman de chiffres”²¹⁸ (Morello, 2010: 96), their affectation and seeming irrelevance actually betray his anxiety for order and control.²¹⁹

The entire syntagmatic structure of marginal and temporally incongruent events is aligned in the text as it would be on a film. The narrative relief is flattened, the story tends to be constantly foregrounded, and the husband’s obsessive rendition of happenings tends to exacerbate the importance of details and negligible facts. Spiegel (1976: 125) interprets these features in terms of the ‘adventitious detail’ and ‘anatomization’, and points to Robbe-Grillet “as the culmination of literary tendencies”, particularly evident from Joyce and Faulkner onward, which “cultivate the microscopic inspection of existential moments”. Marginal

²¹⁸ The novel lends itself to a range of catchy definitions. For example, in Morello one also finds “un roman oximore” (2010: 79); “roman du vide” (101).

²¹⁹ Several critics have highlighted that the husband is racist and repressed. Fletcher (1983: 41) points out that he “spies on his wife but he is also afraid of her, avoiding her eyes. The only time he can gaze at her freely is when he sees her from behind and she cannot see him”.

explanations, as well as past events and situations, are also at times referred to briefly in the *passé composé* or other background tenses:

Bien qu'il fasse tout à fait nuit maintenant, elle a demandé de ne pas apporter les lampes, qui – dit-elle – attirent les moustiques. Les verres sont emplis, presque jusqu'au bord, d'un mélange de cognac et d'eau gazeuse où flotte un petit cube de glace. Pour ne pas risquer d'en renverser le contenu par un faux mouvement, dans l'obscurité complète, elle s'est approchée le plus possible du fauteuil où est assis Franck, tenant avec précaution dans la main droite le verre qu'elle lui destine. Elle s'appuie de l'autre main au bras du fauteuil et se penche vers lui, si près que leurs têtes sont l'une contre l'autre. Il murmure quelques mots: un remerciement, sans doute. (18)

In this exemplary excerpt, the background passage explains why the scene is currently dark. A very limited narrative relief is thus created within a narrative configuration which blatantly favours the putting-into-the-foreground of whatever is mentioned; but the present tense immediately re-emphasises, with its foregrounding function, all the actions and objects which are readily described.

At some points, the husband narrator is evidently part of the situation he describes, as in the dinner with A... and Franck. When a servant moves the table lamp to the opposite side of the room, he refers to the change of light from the perspective of the dining table (22-3). Here, too, a brief background moment is embedded:

Du reste, elle n'était déjà plus tournée vers Franck, à ce moment-là. Elle venait de ramener la tête dans l'axe de la table et regardait droit devant soi, en direction du mur nu, où une tache noirâtre marque l'emplacement du mille-pattes écrasé la semaine dernière, au début du mois, le mois précédent peut-être, ou plus tard. (27)

The millipede on the wall reappears throughout the novel (with some inconsistencies concerning its species and dimension, and conceptually juxtaposed to A... and Franck's

journey), thereby standing out for its figurative importance.²²⁰ Albeit introduced in passing here, it gains a stronger connotation elsewhere. As in chapter two: we read a detailed description of the millipede's anatomical parts that are still visible in the question-mark-shaped spot on the wall. This is a para-cinematic zoom (the husband is actually sitting at the table). Significantly, the narration then proceeds by incongruously returning to a temporal plane that precedes that action: during a dinner, Franck notices a millipede on the wall and catches it with his *serviette*... However, this is not a clear-cut flashback, and the reader remains undecided on how to interpret the text.²²¹ In this passage, a verbalisation of the cinematic reaction shot is found, too: the husband's eyes alternatively follow Franck's movements and A...’s hand clutching a table knife (38-9) – a gesture that will return later, but charged with sexual overtones when the narrator envisions A... clinging to the blankets during sexual intercourse with Franck at the hotel (99). Similarly, in chapter four, which is clearly organised around the topic of the journey, the narrative aligns prior and subsequent situations twice before ending with the millipede scene.

Thus, a cinematic effect is also daringly created when incongruous situations are juxtaposed and coexist on the same discursive and temporal level, even in consecutive paragraphs. In chapter six, the house is empty, the husband is alone, but A... is everywhere like a hologram (“est debout sur la terrasse”, “se tient debout contre une des fenêtres closes du salon”, “est dans la salle de bains”, “sur la terrasse”, 135-8) while the narration regresses from

²²⁰ François Migeot (1999: 97-8) has offered an Oedipal reading of the novel: “La chiffre trois, qui revient sans cesse au cours du texte, désigne un triangle, oedipiquement correct, où le tiers exclu ne peut que ruminer sa jalousie. La lettre A... pourrait bien rappeler ce triangle, ainsi que le parcours de la scutigère qui divise le mur en deux triangles égaux. La sphinx – et l’énigme dont il est porteur – s’incarne ici en un animal monstrueux, dangereux, qui se tord en point d’interrogation. Quant à ce narrateur, tout entier regard, qui voit, mais qui ne voit rien qui crève les yeux, on a bien envie de le comparer à Œdipe”.

²²¹ Compare with Fletcher (1983: 44): “There are, too, frequent shifts of time in the form of unsignaled flashbacks which mirror the husband’s preoccupations, as do the incompatible accounts of the same event which recur in his narrative”.

her being away with Franck to her preparation for the journey. A completely different (and non-cinematic) effect would have been triggered by a different choice of verbs or by the intrusion of the narrator's (not to say the author's) comments. Therefore, the tense configuration here overtly supports the para-cinematic narrative strategy of the text, and accompanies the cinematic techniques that are used within.

Among these techniques, the POV shot stands out and 'frames' objects and characters at a distance: in the passage above, the narrator cannot make out what Franck has murmured; he is probably too distant. This ambiguous POV/full shot is the dominant ocularisation when A... (in particular) and Frank are mentioned. However, because the objects and figures are also framed by the window jambs or observed through the slatted shutters, the husband's vision is often limited or impeded: "A gauche, la porte du bureau est cette fois demeurée grande ouverte. Mais l'inclinaison trop forte des lames aux fenêtres, ne permet pas d'observer l'extérieur depuis le seuil" (51). This fact intensifies his distress: thus, the novel also becomes "un roman de la cécité" (Migeot, 1999: 109): the jealous man is left with suppositions and phantasmal visions as he cannot always see accurately.²²²

This para-cinematic narrative also shows other more particular techniques. In chapter five, the narration seems to imitate an extreme close-up followed by a deep focus:

Au fond du verre qu'il a déposé sur la table en partant, achève du fondre un petit morceau de glace, arrondi d'un côté, présentant de l'autre une arête en biseau. Un peu plus loin se succèdent la bouteille d'eau gazeuse, le cognac, puis le pont qui franchit la petite rivière, où les cinq hommes accroupis sont maintenant disposés de la façon

²²² Consider this other explicit passage when A. changes position in her room: "Elle s'est maintenant réfugiée, encore plus sur la droite, dans l'angle de la pièce, qui constitue aussi l'angle sud-ouest de la maison. Il serait facile de l'observer par l'une des deux portes, celle du couloir central ou celle de la salle de bains; mais les portes sont en bois plein, sans système de jalouses qui laisse voir au travers. Quant aux jalouses des trois fenêtres, aucune d'elles ne permet plus maintenant de rien apercevoir" (122). Also note that, in French, the slatted shutters are also mentioned as blades ("lames"), triggering a net of intratextual references with other objects, such as the razor ("une lame de rasoir", 131) or the knife.

suivante: un sur la rive droite, deux sur le tablier lui-même, près de son bord aval; tous sont orientés vers le même point central qu'ils paraissent considérer avec la plus grande attention. (109)

A couple of pages later, the narrator ironically indulges in Franck's rudeness and the 'spectacular movements' he does while eating; hence, he focuses on Franck's hands with a stylistic procedure seen before in Pirandello:

La main droite saisit le pain et le porte à la bouche, la main droite repose le pain sur la nappe blanche et saisit le couteau, la main gauche saisit la fourchette, la fourchette pique la viande, le couteau coupe un morceau de viande, la main droite pose le couteau sur la nappe (etc.). (111)

Further close-ups abound in other passages: "Maintenant les doigts effilés de la seconde main jouent avec les larges têtes nickelées des clous: la pulpe de la dernière phalange de l'index, du médius et de l'annulaire passe et repasse sur les trois surfaces lisses et bombées" (191). Even the filmic match cut is deployed: when the husband erases the millipede's spot on the wall with a rubber, the following paragraph describes his wife erasing, with the same rubber, a letter on the paper (131-2).

Whereas *La Jalousie* has often been quoted in connection with the cinema, sometimes the film share has been minimised: Morello (2010: 91) only claims that "la liaison entre les épisodes est proche de la technique cinématographique du fondu-enchaîné; l'écriture du roman doit quelque chose à l'écriture filmique". Beyond the misleading reference to the cinematic dissolve, which is totally absent from a text that bluntly juxtaposes extremely detailed and sharp images, it seems that similar statements still retain some of the already-seen distrust toward the intermedial interplay of film and fiction. Other critics (Murray, 1972; Spiegel, 1976) have highlighted the 'cinematic imagination' or 'camera-eye' technique deployed in the text. However, more than a camera-eye enacted by the jealous husband, the narratorial function must be understood in relation to the film syntax and the film narrator

that unravels it. The husband's account overall is clearly the outcome of a later organisation, of a montage: recalling Gaudreault, the *monstration* is put in sequence by the act of a *filmographic narrator*. Following this logic, the two-fold temporality of the written text fully emerges in *La Jalousie* with reference to the two-fold temporality that presentifies a recorded past in film. Ultimately, in fact, this is a novel where the para-cinematic narrator is free to offer a range of ocularisations for the reader to visualise the storyworld. He (it) freely moves like a camera within and without the house, and its ubiquity is signalled in several passages. However, it also carries out some 'impossible' ocularisations for a human eye, as in the case of the visual perspective on the ice melting in the glass with the men at a distance. This is a textual feature that de-personalises and de-humanises the narrative discourse further, thereby revealing that the fundamental narrator behind the organisation of the narrative is completely para-cinematic.

While talking about *Marienbad*, Robbe-Grillet (1963: 132) claimed that "le seul 'personnage' important est le spectateur; c'est *dans la tête* que se déroule l'histoire, qui est exactement *imaginée par lui*". A similar effect of immersion is sought and deployed in *La Jalousie*. The cinematic mode informs, sustains and 'colours' the narrative throughout. The narrative contract with the reader, finally, is the new and arduous one that requires a continuous translation of words into moving-images, differently from the traditional narrative contract of pre-cinematic writers. This para-cinematic narrative contract entails, in Robbe-Grillet's polemical words, "un genre de communication qui n'est plus depuis longtemps celui qu'on lui propose" (1963: 134).

5.5. Pier Paolo Pasolini, *Teorema*

Due to his artistic education and the circulation of themes and forms in his own poetry, novels, films, theatrical works, essays and articles, Pier Paolo Pasolini's (1922-1975) overall experience remains fundamentally interartistic throughout, and particularly suitable for intermedial approaches (“Il segno sotto cui lavoro è sempre la contaminazione”, Pasolini, 2001: 287). However, of this huge “authorial intertext” (Viano, 1993: 1), as well as the extensive bibliography linked to it, I will only deal with a selection of critical discourses that illuminate the two-fold work at issue, *Teorema* (1968), novel and film,²²³ and facilitate my treatment of the novel in terms of the cinematic mode featured within.

Pasolini's fascination for the cinema dates back to his youth, similarly to a lot of writers of his generation.²²⁴ In the 1950s, when he moved to Rome and published his first accomplished novel *Ragazzi di vita* (1955), Pasolini started working as a screenwriter. He became a director in

²²³ Pasolini initially conceived *Teorema* as a theatrical pièce in 1965. The text was subsequently re-elaborated as a film and as a narrative text at the same time and released in 1968. See Pasolini's note on the back cover of the book: “*Teorema* è nato, come su sfondo oro, dipinto con la mano destra, mentre con la sinistra affrescavo una grande parete (il film omonimo). In tale natura anfibologica, non so sinceramente dire quale sia quella prevalente, quella letteraria o quella filmica. Per la verità *Teorema* era nato come pièce in versi circa tre anni fa; poi si è tramutato in film e nel racconto da cui il film è stato tratto e che dal film è stato corretto” (Pasolini, 1998b: 1978). All quotes from *Teorema* refer to this edition.

²²⁴ In an invaluable interview given to Jon Halliday, he recalled the *dépliant* of a movie where a tiger was depicted in the act of tearing a man to pieces. This first memory might have been mediated by the literary reminiscence of the ending scene in Pirandello's *Quaderni di Serafino Gubbio operatore* (1925), a curious case where literary and film culture mingle after several decades. He also recalled joining a film club in Bologna where he watched certain classics (“all of René Clair, the first Renoirs, some Chaplin”). After the war he was particularly impressed by neo-realism: “I can remember going specially from Casarsa to Udine to see *Bicycle Thieves*, and above all *Rome, Open City*, which I saw up in Friuli, which was a real trauma that I still remember with emotion” (Stack, 1969: 30).

the 1960s.²²⁵ After the difficult reception of his ‘Roman’ novels, particularly *Una vita violenta* (1959), and following the debate about the writer’s *impegno* and the *questione della lingua*, the cinema constituted, in Pasolini’s words, a means to live according to his own philosophy of life, “cioè la voglia di vivere fisicamente sempre al livello della realtà” (Pasolini, 2000: 236). Unlike literature, which is made by words (i.e. symbols), cinema seemed the privileged medium to keep contact with reality, to represent reality with reality, thanks to its non-symbolic language (i.e., a language which is first and foremost iconic before being charged with symbolism and allegorical overtones).²²⁶ Despite relying on different semiotic resources (i.e. the audiovisual mode, in contrast to writing, in contemporary terms), for Pasolini filmmaking nonetheless retained a strong connection with writing, since the author’s idea was openly that of Astruc’s *caméra-stylo*: “Se io mi son deciso a fare dei film è perchè ho voluto farli esattamente così come scrivo delle poesie, come scrivo i romanzi” (Pasolini, 2001: 2856-7). However, his idea of filmmaking goes beyond a mere analogy between the camera and the writer’s pen. As Paolo Desogus reminds us (2012: 130), Pasolini elaborated his peculiar ‘semiology of reality’ from a background in semiotics that dated back to the early 1950s. Since cinema, in Pasolini’s conception, is a language – the ‘written language of reality’ – it takes on the aspect of *langue* (i.e. a system of rules and conventions) which comes to be expressed through an act of *parole*

²²⁵ The ‘legend’ of the author undertaking his first film *Accattone* (1961) as a naïf practitioner has, in fact, to be balanced by a retrospective consideration of his involvement in the cinema industry in previous years, as he was a novice behind the camera only as far as its technical apparatus is concerned. The medium of cinema would be a source of creative experimentations, as he would reveal through a copious amount of notes, essays and *battute sul cinema*.

²²⁶ “The cinema forced me to remain always at the level of reality, right inside reality: when I make a film, I am always in reality, among the trees and among people like yourself; there is no symbolic or conventional filter between me and reality, as there is in literature. So in practice the cinema was an explosion of my love for reality” (Stack, 1969: 29). Bazzocchi (2007: 158) conveniently observes: “[Pasolini] sa benissimo che la macchina da presa è uno strumento per scrivere con simboli esattamente come la penna. Ogni immagine non è la realtà, ma un taglio della realtà, una messa in forma della realtà. Lui stesso ha sempre bisogno di ricordi pittorici e culturali per creare i suoi film. La fisicità sta prima, nel suo contatto con i luoghi, con i personaggi, con gli oggetti. Cioè in quello che si chiama tecnicamente ‘profilmico’”.

(i.e. a speech act) by the director when making a film. In other words, Pasolini makes use of reality expressively with his films, as a speaker makes expressive use of the natural language he or she speaks.

Pasolini's 'rash love' and 'passion' for reality had already oriented his stylistic choices in the novels of the 1950s, where his will to depict the *Lumpenproletariat* of the Roman slums resulted in his particular adherence to, and objectification of, language, as well as in the mingling of high and low linguistic registers. His 'mimetic' approach and 'regression into the other' seemed to remediate some cinematic devices, such as Zavattini's technique of characters' *pedinamento* (Panella, 2009: 19), especially in *Ragazzi di vita*, and included the use of a free indirect style, also with a certain lyric slant in *Una vita violenta*. His literary and cinematic realism was mediated by key readings he made in those years. Emanuela Patti (2016) has pointed to two significant forms of appropriation of Dante, mediated by philologists Gianfranco Contini in the 1950s and Erich Auerbach in the 1960s, which shaped Pasolini's idea of 'national-popular', his representation of the Other, and, consequently, his literary style in the 1950s and his cinematic style in the 1960s.²²⁷ With his first two films *Accattone* (1961) and *Mamma Roma* (1962), Pasolini's move from the literary to the cinematic treatment of the destitute groups in the Roman *borgate* was not a simple abandonment of the old medium for

²²⁷ "The first, which I name 'Dantean realism', follows the 1951 publication of Contini's essay on Dante and Petrarch's languages, 'Preliminari sulla lingua del Petrarca', and it corresponds with Pasolini's progressive 'objectification' of poetic and narrative language and his use of plurilingualism in the early 1950s". As Patti explains, it is after this study that "Dante's plurilingualism is used by Pasolini as a model to rethink the linguistic representation of the other (namely the subaltern and its reality) at a sociological level, and, more precisely, to reconsider the gap between high and low languages and cultures in relation to the *questione della lingua* (what is the national language?) and the 'national-popular'". The second form of appropriation, which she names 'figural realism', "follows the Italian translation and publication of Auerbach's *Mimesis* in 1956, and it corresponds with Pasolini's formulation of his own cinematographic style, particularly evident in his early cinema – the so-called 'national-popular phase' – from *Accattone* (1961) to *Il Vangelo secondo Matteo* (1964). Concepts such as Dante's 'mingling of styles' and 'figura' become essential constituents of his new ideal of fictional representation, marking the shift from literature to cinema in his career" (Patti, 2016: 3-4). On Dante in Pasolini's cinema see also Bazzocchi (2007: 37-56).

the new. Pasolini's realism changed when he became a film director. As Maurizio Viano (1993: X), followed by Patti (2010: 39), highlights, Pasolini's "fetishistic use of the word *reality*" led him to frame his own cinematography within the discourse of realism", even though his realism was actually quite eccentric. Pasolini's cinema immediately contrasted with some of the stylistic principles of many neorealist films and seemed to enact, in cinematic terms, Auerbach's concept of *figura* (cf. Patti, 2016). Moreover, he stressed that *Accattone* was his first cinematic attempt to reproduce sacredness in human beings,²²⁸ and that he achieved an effect of holiness and hieraticism through a peculiar use of lenses and focuses, odd frontal shots and light exposure.²²⁹ On the other hand, his own films were particularly indebted to Carl T. Dreyer's and Kenji Mizoguchi's styles, in a search for essentiality in the composition of the image which he would never forsake.²³⁰

Some recent critical works on Pasolini's realism have shed light on the connection between the notion of sacredness and otherness, and shown that Pasolini's stylistic choices aim at a 'more truthful reality' beyond the surface of appearances: as Patti observes (2010: 39), "what the filmmaker was acknowledging was precisely the gap that exists between reality and

²²⁸ Many scholars have explored Pasolini's concept of sacredness, including Giuseppe Conti Calabrese (1994), Robert Gordon (1996); Patrick Rumble (1996), Giorgio Agamben (1998), Armando Maggi (2009), Pierpaolo Antonello (2012), Emanuela Patti (2016). As Rumble argues (1996: 143), Pasolini's forms of expression were all pertaining to an area of the sacred which is inherently an "excluded space of otherness"; Maggi (2009: 26) points out that, for Pasolini, 'sacred time' can be conjured up only as absence, that is, as a nostalgic longing for what has vanished.

²²⁹ See also his reply on the neorealist style in *Accattone*: "Non mi sembra di aver seguito in generale lo stile del Neorealismo [...] pensavo più a Dreyer" (Pasolini, 2001: 2805). See also his reference to the lenses he used: "Sacralità: frontalità. E quindi religione. In tanti hanno parlato dell'intima religione di *Accattone*". 50mm and 70mm lenses were Pasolini privileged choices at the beginning: "obiettivi che appesantiscono la materia, esaltano il tuttotondo, il chiaroscuro, danno gravità" (2001: 2768-9).

²³⁰ After his first film *Accattone*, Pasolini explained: "Cerco di evitare tutto quello che è ornamentale, che è *trop plein*, troppo vivace ecco; [...] la mia ispirazione [...] è soprattutto la pittura – nella fattispecie – di Masaccio, un pittore estremamente visivo in quanto la materia che lui mostra ha una violenza chiaroscurale di una plasticità impressionante". He also added: "Se lei analizza *Accattone* vedrà come *La Passion de Jeanne d'Arc* di Dreyer mi abbia influenzato dandomi il senso del primo piano, il senso della severità figurativa, visiva appunto. [...] È stato uno dei miei modelli figurativi cinematografici" (2001: 2868-71).

representation, where reality seems to imply a more hidden dimension than what is actually represented”. The dialectic of the Real (in Lacan’s terms) and reality, physical reality and fictional reality, otherness and culturally-constructed identity, is therefore a driving force in shaping Pasolini’s realism, which can be interpreted as “a re-presentation of, and an emancipation from, reality, which follows the deconstruction of the rhetoric of cultural discourse” (Patti, 2010: 40). Cinematic realism, in short, is a means of questioning reality itself, and this is particularly evident in *Teorema*. As soon as it was presented at the Venice film festival, the film caused scandal and controversy.²³¹ The book marked Pasolini’s return to the novel form (though anomalous, it is a prosimetrum) and a breakthrough of the *impasse* he felt ten years prior, following the criticism of his novel *Una vita violenta*, by means of a renewed approach to literary representation. The two-fold work is also his first attempt to represent that bourgeoisie which would become the centre of his interests as an artist and ‘corsair’ writer since.

In *Teorema*, the identity and unity of a bourgeois Milanese family is shaken by the arrival and subsequent departure of a Guest, a sort of God-Devil-Dionysus, an *it* (Viano 1993), unmasking the bourgeois order through his sexual appeal. Both in the novel and the film, characters are presented as human types with the initial exposition of the ‘data’ about their ways of life. The first part describes how all family members, servant Emilia included, cannot help but surrender to the god’s seduction and have sexual intercourse with him. Viano (1993:

²³¹ “*Teorema*, [...] nella sua disarmata e feroce provocazione, verrà attaccato con violenza da ogni parte: dallo Stato, che lo porrà sotto sequestro intentando nei confronti dell’autore un processo per oscenità; dai benpensanti e dalle destre, accomunati dal disgusto per l’uso spregiudicato e ‘perverso’ della sessualità; dalla critica della sinistra ‘militante’, da cui sarà accusato di ‘misticismo’, ‘reazionarietà’ e ‘religiosità’; e infine anche dal mondo cattolico, che dopo aver conferito al film a Venezia il premio dell’OCIC (Office Catholique International du Cinéma), ha successivamente preso le distanze dalle dichiarazioni dell’autore, soprattutto riguardo all’associazione tra sessualità e senso del sacro. *Teorema* è insomma il film che più di ogni altro traccia con definitiva nettezza la posizione di progressivo, totale isolamento intellettuale di Pasolini, che sarà trasformato di lì a poco in una specie di ‘mostro del dissenso’ da esorcizzare ‘facendolo parlare’” (Murri 1994: 97).

203) points to the allegorical overtone of the text, in which “every sexual encounter signifies the encounter of a sign-in-crisis with passion”. The Guest has often been interpreted, alternatively, as a manifestation of the sacred; however, as Patti (2010: 42) convincingly argues, it could also be “reconsidered as a metaphor for the destabilizing eruption of the Real in the lives of the upper-middle class Milanese family portrayed in the film” when it comes into contact with the Other; Fabio Vighi (2009) has similarly argued that Pasolini’s idea of the sacred could be given a Lacanian twist and be replaced by the Real. Thus, it seems that the Guest/Visitor embodies and unifies a complex symbolism relating to sacredness, otherness, and destabilising power, disclosing a more-than-real reality and opening all the bourgeois characters to a Self-revelation with his passage. The plot – the theorem – is therefore about the impact of the sacred or Real on the bourgeoisie in the form of sexual scandal.²³²

When the Guest leaves the house at the end of the first part, the consequences are different for each individual. As Marco Antonio Bazzocchi puts it, “la sacralità si mostra e distrugge. Compare come catastrofe, e porta con sé i segni della sua labilità” (2007: 77). The Guest’s ‘sacred sex’ brings the subversive power of sacredness that ancient cultures had long known into the contemporary, inauthentic culture of the bourgeoisie. Those who experience it are shocked. The four bourgeois members thereby fail to retain both the reality principle that they have been forced to acknowledge (Rinaldi, 1982: 258), and their previous identities and certainties linked with the bourgeois social order. Both the Father (Paolo) and the Mother (Lucia) *open up* and *hand themselves over*: the man cedes his factory to his workers (the scene is foreshadowed both in the novel and the film) and renounces his social status, ending up in a

²³² As Pasolini puts it, “l’interessante dal punto di vista funzionale dell’opera è che in una famiglia borghese, che vive inautenticamente, in una falsa idea di se stessa, arrivi qualcosa di autentico” (2001: 2968). See Desogus (2012: 142): “All’epoca della realizzazione del film, la sessualità è per l’autore uno degli ultimi luoghi di libertà espressiva: in essa la vitalità del singolo non è ancora vincolata, regolamentata da forme di costrizione o, ancora, ritualizzata secondo quelle pratiche di dominio che l’autore esibirà più tardi in *Salò o le 120 giornate di Sodoma*”.

metaphoric desert where his soul screams in despair;²³³ the woman gives her body to pathetic and obsessive sexual intercourse with strangers, and renounces her respectability, but ultimately returns to Catholicism. Both bare themselves quite literally and represent the dissolution of the family in their coercive (the father-owner) and merely representative function (the mother turned into a whore). The Son (Pietro) and the Daughter (Odetta) *close* into themselves neurotically and *acquire* an extremely disturbed self-consciousness outside of the family context: the boy strives to become an artist and his sort of formal research leads him to paint a final blue spot on the canvas, after ‘performing’ a urination on his previous work; the girl, previously wholly engrossed in the cult of her family, looks for the image of the sacred in some photographs of the Guest and the Father which she had taken in the garden, but suffers an aphasic seizure which leads to her being hospitalised. They represent a deadlock, following the definitive loss of the sacred, or the impossibility of attaining a more truthful reality and their Self. Therefore, in the press enquiry about the donation of the factory, the core idea of the theorem is made explicit: “L’ipotesi – non molto originale – sarebbe dunque che la borghesia non può più in nessun modo liberarsi della propria sorte, né pubblicamente né privatamente, e che *qualunque cosa un borghese faccia sbaglia?*” (1051). Following the passing of the Guest and the impact of the sacredness-otherness mediated by the sexual relationship, the bourgeois characters shift their perspectives without being able to change their nature; they are doomed to an existential *impasse* (particularly evident visually in Paolo and Odetta), for there is neither personal nor historical redemption. On the contrary,

²³³ The final image recalls the verses of *Exodus*, which are pronounced in voice-over in the film and appear as the initial epigraph in the book: “Dio fece quindi piegare il popolo per la via del deserto” (*Ex*, 13, 18). Compare with Pasolini’s words: “Nel deserto io vedo l’abbandono della società e la solitudine interiore dell’individuo. Come è per esempio il caso del padre in *Teorema*, che dopo aver donato la sua fabbrica trova attorno a sé il vuoto. In un certo senso il deserto è sì una forma preistorica ma soprattutto questa forma è tale che ci si ritorna nel momento in cui si abbandona la società, e cioè si riconosce la solitudine interiore” (Pasolini, 2001: 2948-9).

the servant Emilia leaves the family and the city and goes back to her farmstead in a rural area. She is “the allegorical representation of alterity to the status quo” (Viano, 1993: 212), the only one able to retain the sacred because of her humble and pre-industrial origins, or, following Patti’s nuance in interpretation (2010: 44), “the only character who can cope with the eruption of the Real” since she is already an outsider. An abstract character, almost a byzantine icon throughout the film, she turns into a saint in the ‘corollary’. All acts of the bourgeois family members are gathered within her sanctity and rendered positive: she changes her social status in front of the peasants and soaks the ground with her tears; she renounces sexuality and seeks a stubborn loneliness on a bench; the religiousness she evokes is not hypocritical but primordial; she heals a child in her first ‘performance’ and (only in the book) the wound on a man’s arm with her sacred tears; and she becomes lucidly silent until her final utterance before leaving the farm and being buried alive.²³⁴ Her silence is the trace of terror that the revelation of the sacred has left on her. Unlike Odetta, who lies in bed refusing food with her fists clenched, Emilia levitates with open arms and asks for some nettle to eat.²³⁵ She does not need to replace the sacred with simulacra.²³⁶

The geometric rigor and stylistic choices deployed in the narrative follow a search for essentiality which, in the book, is effectively filmic, inasmuch as the narrator tends to limit the information to be given to the reader. After the initial scene at the factory, the story shifts back

²³⁴ As Viano interestingly notes (1993: 212), “her final self-burial, leaving her eyes uncovered, is an effective dramatization of the gaze ‘from the far edge of some buried age’ described in the poem recited by Orson Welles in *La ricotta*”.

²³⁵ The connection with food traverses Pasolini’s cinematography throughout. See Bazzocchi (2007: 57-82) for a fundamental discussion on the topic.

²³⁶ These five figures have prompted different and contrasting interpretations by the critics that I shall not investigate here for obvious reasons. For example, Viano (1993: 201-2; 206-13) interprets all characters as well as sex itself (embodied by the Guest) in terms of “signs”, and the whole film as an attempt to point to the “crisis of signs” that affects bourgeois society; Bazzocchi (2007: 117) notes that religion, folly, art, sex and power are represented by means of excess in the five characters, and that the film might be an allegory of Pasolini’s personal search for sacredness in a society that has lost it; Caminati (2008: 384-5) similarly notes that Pasolini employs onomastic references and interprets all characters as emblems of his personality.

and follows a linear progression. It is clearly produced by an omniscient narrator who ‘explains’ (by representing) his theorem (structurally, the narrative also recalls Tolstoy’s *Death of Ivan Ilych*, 1886, a novel that appears in the storyworld being read by the Father and evoked in the scene where the Guest lifts up his feet). The verse sections constitute the most significant difference between the film and the novel. These sections take on a function as *Leitmotiv* comparable to those of the soundtrack and the images of the desert in the film: however, while in the film the initial turnover of disturbing extradiegetic sound with classic and beat music signals the transition of characters and situations, and the desert is embedded as a pure metaphor of the bourgeois deserted soul, the verses of the book accommodate the characters’ monologues and touch the highest moral concentration with their intense prosaicism, especially in the appendix after the first part. In the novel, the characters’ personal ‘data’ and ‘corollaries’ are rendered mostly through sensorial information: external focalisation and straight behaviourist style dominate.²³⁷ Because of the emphasis on the characters’ gestures, the novel seems to be somehow as ‘visual’ as the film; on the other hand, in the film, these gestures are sometimes substituted or ‘filled’ with arid direct dialogues, probably because of the difficulty in keeping the scene silent and aesthetically appealing at the same time.²³⁸ The almost speechless two-fold work is explained by Pasolini in these terms: “Se l’avessi fatto in teatro questo dio avrebbe parlato, e che cosa avrebbe detto? Cose assurde. Invece adesso parla attraverso gli altri, attraverso la presenza fisica pura e semplice, cioè il massimo della

²³⁷ This behaviourist style, in effect, is rather pedantically explicit in several passages: “Non entreremo nella coscienza di Lucia. Essa, dopo essersi fatta il segno della croce, è rimasta immobile presso la porta” (1031-2); and then: “non entreremo neanche nella coscienza di Paolo – come non siamo entrati nella coscienza di Lucia. Ci limiteremo a descrivere i suoi atti, dovuti – ciò è evidente – a una coscienza già fuori dalla vita” (1047).

²³⁸ However, dialogues are very limited in the film. Serafino Murri (1994: 97) points out that the film “approfondisce ed estremizza la ricerca formale già intrapresa con *Edipo re*, quella della rinuncia progressiva all’espressione verbale, e della preponderanza dell’immagine silenziosa, piena, liberata dal vincolo didascalico borghese”.

cinematografia” (2001: 2941). Such physical presence, which means ‘cinematography’, is recognisable in the written fiction too.

Several cinematic techniques also appear in the written sequences of the book from the beginning. A number of montage-derived textual cuts and matches are imitated, such as the match on action (Emilia disappears at a distance along a boulevard, a blank space interrupts the paragraph, and she arrives in a piazza; 982), and the axial cut (Emilia initially can see only the whole figure of the Guest at a distance, “ma poi il suo occhio si aguzza, [...] esplora torva i dettagli del corpo che si offre laggiù così intero e inconsapevole”; 908-9). Eyeline matches are widely observable: a prime example is when the Guest is described while playing with a dog, but subsequently we read that it is Lucia who observes him, so that the description of the Guest is Lucia’s internal ocularisation. In the subsequent description about Lucia (the reverse shot), the scenery behind her figure is also described accordingly, as if an ekphrasis of a film still (920). These two images are reversed in the film: here it is immediately evident that Lucia is looking at the Guest; then the image of the man follows (a ‘secondary internal ocularisation’ in Jost terms). This ocularisation by Lucia is more daring and inventive in the book, because the question ‘who sees?’ is resolved unexpectedly. Further, her POVs on the Guest’s clothes (whose whiteness is a sign of the sacred, cf. Bazzocchi, 2007: 124) will be duplicated in the second part by the POVs on the student’s clothes (1025). In general, then, Pasolini’s insists on the characters’ faces by means of still and prolonged close-ups both in the novel and the film. The sequence at the chalet proceeds with another shot/reverse shot:

Esce di nuovo sulla porta. Guarda di nuovo il ragazzo, che corre laggiù, tra le ramaglie che per la troppa luce hanno perso ogni colore.
Si sente forte, nel silenzio del mezzogiorno, l’abbaiare lieto di Barbì, il cane.
La donna guarda il ragazzo lontano, e il suo sguardo si fa sempre più smarrito. (922-3)

Moreover, continuous diegetic sound (the bells at noon) invites the reader to connect the scenes temporally from the outset. As in films, explicit cause-effect relations tend to disappear:

the reader is driven to construct the narrative by means of audiovisual signs and infer contemporaneity and consequentiality. As also mentioned by Ivaldi (2011: 239), in the initial exposition of the data, Pasolini's technique recalls the 'bracket syntagma' already described by Metz (1974: 125-7) at the Pesaro Film Festival in 1965.²³⁹ The theme of noon, perhaps an allusion to a narration without shadows and shade, returns throughout the narrative as well. Similarly, the sound of the bells is not limited to the beginning, but returns later, for example in the sequences at the chalet, at the football pitch, in the nettle harvest, or in the final enquiry in the end that concludes the narration in a ring structure. Pasolini's description of sounds is significant: consider Barbin's barks, or even the "stupida radio lontana" (940), the noise of the mower among others, which contribute to the effective cinematography of the text as well. The noise of the grass cutter appears only in the book and leads the reader to visualise the scene more closely, which had begun with a long shot and the "rumori – molto lontani – della città":

A spingere avanti e indietro la falciatrice in quel modo è Emilia.

Essa è in un angolo del giardino, in fondo a un prato liscio, piatto, d'un verdecupo che quasi accieca, mentre il giovane è in un altro angolo, presso la casa, sotto un pergolato di edera. (907)

Precise perspectives often seem prompted by specific visual vantage points, as in this case: "Il giardino, molto grande, coi suoi prati verdi all'inglese, l'ingresso della casa e la strada sottostante sono su un solo piano, un ambiente unico alla stessa altezza" (916), where "piano"

²³⁹ Like the 'parallel syntagma', the 'bracket syntagma' is a *nonchronological* syntagma: in nonchronological syntagma, "the temporal relationship between the facts presented in the different images is not defined by the film". In particular, in the bracket syntagma, "a series of very brief scenes representing occurrences that the film gives as typical samples of a same order of reality, without in any way chronologically locating them in relation to each other in order to emphasize their presumed kinship within a category of facts that the film-maker wants to describe in visual terms" (Metz, 1974: 125-6).

means ‘campo totale’ (wide shot), and the fact that the technical jargon of cinema is resolved more literally is relevant, as it means that the cinema is not simply thematised but formally imitated (see the difference with Morante’s *Aracoeli* below).²⁴⁰ Therefore, a para-cinematic visualisation is triggered by the very visual quality of the verbal narration, which is a clear feature, being orientated rather implicitly and linked to the use of the present tense. This tense triggers a flattening of the narrative relief that is quintessential to the cinematic mode in fiction and also combines here with external focalisation. This flattening is all the more enhanced in a film that unfolds like a theorem and is more than perceivable in the novel as a modulation of the source medium.

Since intrinsic cinematography for Pasolini is in ‘pure presence’, in the novel a quick depiction of places and environments seems to imitate filmic establishing shots, as in the initial image of the factory. Among the many subsequent cases (book sequences 6, 7, 8, 10, 12, 14, 18, 22, etc.), the quick image of the bench abandoned by Emilia stands out, and the reader subsequently discovers she is levitating over the farmstead. This is another passage that offers the same visualisation both in the film and in the book: “La panca contro la parete scrostata del casale è vuota. Emilia non è più lì. Essa oggi si trova più in alto. [...] Emilia, insomma, è sospesa nel cielo” (1033).

In the novel, the para-cinematic narrator describes places and details with great precision thanks to the implicit imitation/limitation given by a virtual frame. This para-cinematic style

²⁴⁰ Significantly, Ivaldi (2011) insists on the opposite idea, for her analysis mixes textual features in a melting pot of cinematic cues, whereas completely different effects stem from writers’ uses of diverse narrative solutions. In the few passages where technical terms appear, one can observe that these are so generic and commonly used as not to be relevant. Many of them, if anything, are long-established terms originating from theatrical culture: “questo ambiente, contro questo sfondo” (896); “questa scena” (903); “uno scenario tremolante e trasparente di pioppi”, (983); “quella quinta desolata e proterva di case” (1018). In a few minor passages, these references to theatre are also made explicit by a character (“parlo come nel monologo del personaggio di una tragedia”, 975), or by the narrator, as in this sort of screenplay indication: “Emilia – teatralmente – lascia la falciatrice” (909).

is clearly perceivable in the translation of ‘objective’ shots on the page. At the end, Paolo’s unclothing at the station is entirely external to the man’s perception. Both in the film and the book there is a very precise zero ocularisation at the conclusion of his act: “accanto al mucchio dei vestiti, appaiono alla fine i due piedi nudi: che si girano, e, a passo lento, si allontanano lungo il pavimento grigio e lustro della pensilina, in mezzo alla folla della gente, calzata, che si stringe intorno allarmata e muta” (1048), with the detail of his bare feet that is highly significant in Pasolini for its Oedipal implication. Moreover, interestingly, a filmic metonymy is imitated here, in that the power of the image that expresses the concrete for the abstract is exploited in the written text.

Therefore, Pasolini’s shift of medium at the beginning of the 1960s marked a substantial shift in his approach to reality. He immediately refused to conceive his filmmaking as a simple re-proposal of the matter *di vita* by a different means, while gradually gaining a greater awareness of the medium of cinema also in relation to literature. In two interviews released in 1961 and 1962, in a cultural context of prolonged diffidence on the cinema-literature relationship, he revealed himself a maverick once more in claiming that “tra lo scrivere e il girare c’è una differenza solo di quantità più che di qualità” (2001: 2799), and that cinema and literature are not antithetical arts: “Direi, anzi, che esse sono forme analoghe. Il desiderio di esprimersi attraverso il cinema rientra nel mio bisogno di adottare una tecnica nuova, una tecnica che rinnovi” (cf. Martini, 1961). As Giuseppe Panella observes (2009: 93), after his experience as a director “scrivere poesia o romanzi risulterà per Pasolini un’operazione nettamente diversa rispetto al suo passato di poeta e di romanziere” for the fundamental reason that “il cinema *diventa* la sua attività centrale di poeta”.

Pasolini’s theory of the cinema of poetry is key to understanding his artistic evolution in the middle of the 1960s and, in particular, the use of his *soggettiva libera indiretta* in *Teorema*. His theory draws on his reflection on the free indirect discourse in literature and stemmed from his 1965 article *La volontà di Dante a essere poeta* (Pasolini, 2000: 104-14) and the controversy that

followed.²⁴¹ Free indirect discourse has traditionally been conceived as a way to *cover* the author's presence in favour of the reality represented, meaning in favour of a mimesis of reality. In extreme cases, free indirect discourse tends towards producing a complete discursive impersonality, as in the obvious cases of Flaubert, Zola and Verga, or in Pasolini's *Ragazzi di vita*. In such a meaning, free indirect discourse is just the opposite of Pasolini's controversial idea, since he conceives it non-grammatically, and in Auerbach's perspective, as a sign of the author's will to keep speaking and reveal *him/herself* by aligning with a certain social perspective. The use of free indirect discourse in literature is, to Pasolini, an index of the author's sociological insights, of his or her understanding the social aspects within a given historical milieu.²⁴² Therefore, his idea of free indirect discourse in the 1960s is conceptually opposed to that of nineteenth-century writers: in the one case, the author keeps making the scene through the discursive form of the *oratio obliqua*; in the other, the author tends to disappear.

Pasolini tries to apply this literary technique to the cinema. Yet, his idea of *soggettiva libera indiretta* in film is not a linear translation of the free indirect style of writing. As he explains, since the 'sociological' reproduction of the characters' actual ways of looking-at is impossible with the camera, or can only be extremely limited, when it comes to applying free indirect discourse to film, the filmmaker's operation cannot be a linguistic one, but only a stylistic

²⁴¹ Several critics have discussed this key passage in Pasolini's career. See Patti (2016) for a very recent contribution on the topic.

²⁴² In Pasolini's words (2000: 92), using such a technique always entails some clownishness because it is finally "l'azione di un mimo"; moreover, it is "estremamente letterario". He continues (2000: 93): "Interi romanzi non sono che che interi Liberi Indiretti, in quanto o ci sia una totale identificazione dell'autore con un personaggio, o i personaggi siano una pseudo-oggettivazione dell'autore, o i personaggi siano dei meccanismi per esprimere, in un linguaggio sostanzialmente paritetico, la tesi dell'autore, o infine, inconsciamente, i personaggi vivano perfettamente allo stesso modo il mondo sociale e ideologico dell'autore". As he puts it later, free indirect discourse "è semplicemente l'immersione dell'autore nell'animo del suo personaggio, e quindi l'adozione, da parte dell'autore, non solo della psicologia del suo personaggio, ma anche della sua lingua" (2000: 176).

one.²⁴³ However, as the *soggettiva libera indiretta* is a ‘pretextual’ act (he repeats this several times in his essay), it does not equate to the filmic POV shot unless one postulates an intradiegetic narrator who is a beholder, which would be nonsense in Pasolini’s films. The *soggettiva libera indiretta* enacts, rather, an indirect subjectivity – that of the poet/director – which is conveyed in the film diegesis by virtue of his stylistic choices and is expressed through the function of the narrator; a subjectivity, therefore, freely operating in the film and by no means clearly understandable by the spectator, who should be well aware of Pasolini’s background (that is to say: the implied author) to grasp his style and make sense of it.²⁴⁴ Pasolini, in fact, writes that the cinema of poetry is indeed “una *prosa d’arte* [...] la cui soggettività è assicurata dall’uso pretestuale della ‘soggettiva libera indiretta’” (2000: 185). The cinema of poetry entails a fundamental search for lyricism.²⁴⁵ Pasolini describes the use of free indirect discourse in film as a pretextual act that allows *the author* to ‘speak’ in the film diegesis virtually. Within this conceptual frame, the *soggettiva libera indiretta* can also occasionally mediate the perspective of a character.²⁴⁶ As Luca Caminati observes (2008: 383), *Teorema* “strains the notion of ‘free indirect discourse’ to its limits, in a complex narrative pattern where all the members of the Milanese family see ‘with’ the eyes of the filmmaker”. However, such an idea of *soggettiva libera indiretta* should not be reduced to these specific shots but must be extended on a discursive

²⁴³ “Praticamente dunque, a un possibile livello linguistico comune fondato sugli ‘sguardi’ alle cose, la differenza che un regista può cogliere tra sé e un personaggio è psicologica e sociale. *Ma non linguistica*. Egli è perciò completamente impossibilitato a ogni *mimesis* naturalistica di un linguaggio, di un ipotetico ‘sguardo’ altrui alla realtà. Quindi, se egli si immerge in un suo personaggio, e attraverso lui racconta la vicenda o rappresenta il mondo, non può valersi di quel formidabile strumento differenziante in natura che è la lingua. *La sua operazione non può essere linguistica ma stilistica*” (Pasolini 2000: 178-9). Note that the use of the verb ‘si immerge’ reveals quite a different stance in respect to French naturalism and Italian *verismo*, where reality ‘talks’ by itself (and by means of the author’s detachment).

²⁴⁴ As Viano emphasises (1993: 4), Pasolini’s experience is dominated by a very strong sense of authorship that is all the more evident when he became a filmmaker.

²⁴⁵ We see this idea already forming in the interview in “Filmcritica” in 1962: “In fondo il cinema più che a un romanzo o a un racconto [può] essere paragonato alla lirica” (Pasolini, 2001: 2800).

²⁴⁶ See Desogus (2012) for an interesting analysis of some shots relating to Emilia and the Guest.

level in consideration of the film as a whole. With this term and his notion of cinema of poetry, Pasolini fundamentally broaches what Gaudreault deals with in terms of *fundamental narrator*; a narrator, sure enough, that in Pasolini's cinema particularly 'lyricises' his narrative through its (his) own subjectivity. Put in another way, Pasolini also reaffirms and re-deploys within his own poetics what Robbe-Grillet had already pointed out with *La Jalousie*: the objectivity of gaze always entails subjectivity behind. The cinema of poetry is the cinema where the authors 'make you feel the camera' (Pasolini, 2000: 184), in contrast with the conventions of continuity editing. As Pasolini (2000: 187) puts it further, the use of the *soggettiva libera indiretta* "serve a parlare indirettamente – attraverso un qualsiasi alibi narrativo – in prima persona". By actualising Pasolini's terminology through contemporary narratology, I observe more precisely that he was fundamentally talking about the function of the filmographic monstrator (or putting-into-frame of reality, of the profilmic), and of the function of the filmographic narrator (or putting-into-film): in other words, in the cinema of poetry, and particularly in *Teorema*, which perfectly exemplifies it, such a cinematic narrator overtly reveals the author 'behind', throughout the cinematic semiosis, in the form of a free indirect subjectivity.²⁴⁷ Thus, the shift from language to style translates free indirect discourse (a linguistic category) into free indirect subjectivity (an aesthetic category). Regarding the latter term, it must be noted that in the English translation, *Heretical Empiricism* (2005), *soggettiva libera indiretta* becomes "free indirect point-of-view shot", whereas "free indirect subjectivity" seems to me a preferable term. Ultimately, by means of such subjectivity, both in the film and the novel where this technique is re-mediated, it is the reader or the spectator who constantly sees

²⁴⁷ Ivaldi misunderstands this: "Pur avendo 'coscienza sociologica' della classe da cui proviene e in cui è immerso, Pasolini la rifiuta, e ne rigetta il contagio per mimesi, evitando assolutamente di assumere un punto di vista interno alla borghesia. A sciogliere l'*empasse* [sic] interviene il modulo cinematografico: neutralizzando il narratore, e rifiutando questo indiretto libero, Pasolini costruisce per *Teorema* una focalizzazione non solo asetticamente esterna, ma addirittura, per così dire, 'epidermica'" (2011: 226-7).

through Pasolini's eyes. Throughout the story, we acknowledge the author's intention to make us perceive the events from a certain, and very rigid, perspective. The result is a radical anti-naturalism, which is openly reflected in the novel as well. Moreover, as several interpreters have pointed out (e.g. Bazzocchi, 2007: 187; Desogus, 2012: 137; Viano, 1993: 200), the etymology of the word 'theorem' (from the Greek *theorein*, to look at, to observe; from *theoros*, spectator) is key to understanding the work, and addresses the issue of spectatorship.

Among many others cases, such free indirect subjectivity is observable in the triangulation of gazes between Odetta, her father and the Guest in sequence 22, *Attraverso gli occhi del padre innamorato*, which unfolds similarly in the novel and the film. In the film, a 'false' POV shot from the father's perspective shows Odetta reading a book and is followed by her glance at him (fig. 1, see Appendix); the framing of the father is then shifted to the position of the Guest (fig. 2), who is soon visualised from the father's POV in the following shot (fig. 3). At the father's request "Che cosa stai leggendo?", the Guest starts reading abruptly from Rimbaud's *Illuminations* and is now visualised from Odetta's POV (fig. 4); the subsequent 'objective' shot on the father (fig. 5) turns out to be 'false' or odd again as soon as we realise that Odetta is looking at him in the next shot (fig. 6). Odetta turns her eyes towards the Guest and down to her book while he completes reading Rimbaud's text (fig. 7). Finally, the Guest is framed from Odetta's POV (fig. 8), and this chain of gazes ends, from the perspective of the Guest, in an intense close-up of Odetta (fig. 9), who is undergoing an interior overturning and begins feeling sexually attracted to him.

In the film, Odetta's inner being is therefore rendered by means of a purposely discontinuous, unstable and disorientating montage of ambiguous perspectives; however, the narrative focus is clearly on her. Viano especially highlights the allegorical meaning of her character and interprets her nervous breakdown as "the outcome of a woman's impossible relation to patriarchy's petrifying gaze" (1993: 120): from the beginning, in fact, Odetta "seems to have no reality of her own" and "no image of herself except through the eye of an

over-powering male”, namely the Father. In this sequence, we feel she is attracted to the Guest because of what he did for her father in the preceding sequence (when he mitigated her father’s pain). This film scene is a clear example of the ‘cinema of poetry’ Pasolini was formulating. In the novel, the same scene is reproposed but less analytically; nonetheless, it is represented by a similar insistence on eye movements and invites the reader to a cinematic perception, despite being clearly more explicit and summarising. The heart of the sequence lies in a few very scenic lines:

Forse è per questo che l’occhio di Odetta sfugge alle parole estranee del libro, e va a interrogare il volto di quel nuovo padre disteso davanti a lei.

Ed ecco che l’occhio del padre si apre, vivacemente, e si posa, come sempre, sul volto dell’ospite. Odetta ancora una volta, segue quello sguardo; ma, mentre fino allora lo aveva distolto subito dall’ospite per ritornare al padre, ora invece si sofferma per la prima volta a osservare quel giovane uomo che ha sempre ignorato. Lo vede, in fondo, ora, per la prima volta (946-7).

Both in the film and the novel, it is as if an invisible observer moved between these characters looking for an apt positioning. As readers, we are given zero ocularisations which are somewhat marked by the presence-absence of a narrator. In *Teorema*-novel, Pasolini went beyond the problematic results of his Roman stories, either by radically overturning the hated naturalism or avoiding sterile avant-gardism;²⁴⁸ and he did that through a remediation of the filmic free indirect subjectivity within the written text. Given that film by nature seemed always ‘naturalistic’ to some extent, in the use of free indirect subjectivity and insistent montage he found a way to escape such an aesthetic outcome, which was hotly contested in

²⁴⁸ “Infatti, finito di leggere un testo d’avanguardia [...] che cosa vengo a sapere *dell’autore* di quel testo? Ah, qui, assolutamente nulla. O meglio, vengo a sapere una sola, un’unica cosa: vengo a sapere, cioè, che si tratta di un letterato” (Pasolini 2000: 130-1). See also a similar critique of the authors of New American Cinema in *I segni viventi e i poeti morti* (Pasolini 2000: 250-5).

critical discourses in the 1950s and 1960s.²⁴⁹ Ultimately, *Teorema* is “un’opera che ‘fa teoria’, [...] un’opera attraverso la quale l’autore cerca di dimostrare la sua teoria del linguaggio cinematografico” (Desogus, 2012: 136; cf. also Viano, 1993: 199).

Finally, the form of *Teorema*-novel is affected by both Pasolini’s film experience and his search for a more direct relation with sacredness and otherness. It also follows from the debate concerning literary formal experimentations from the mid-Fifties to the mid-Sixties, especially in dialogue with the neo-avant-garde. As a matter of fact, the very narrative configuration of *Teorema* reproposes a formal topic of those years (the anti-novel).²⁵⁰ The relationship between the neo-avant-garde and Pasolini was highly conflictual; but the avant-gardists’ contribution to the renewal of themes and forms may have played a subtle influence on him, especially in relation to Renato Barilli’s considerations on a trend in contemporary literature, what he dealt with in terms of “quotidianità *autre*” in 1963.²⁵¹ Barilli observed that, in manifold textual passages from books of those years, the old Joycean epiphany was scattered on the more ordinary ground of everyday life (see Balestrini 2013: 11-26; Barilli 1995: 252). In *Teorema* the epiphany turns into a true hierophany (Greek: *hieros*, holy/sacred; and *phainein*, to reveal) that impacts on the bourgeois family’s daily life.

On the other hand, *Teorema* also reflects previous turning points in France with the *nouveau roman*, so that the book can be accorded a substantial “*nouveau-roman style*”, as Caminati puts it

²⁴⁹ “La lingua [del cinema di] prosa è invece una lingua in qualche modo naturalistica. Essa mette in rilievo e porta fino al parossismo la vocazione, e il limite, naturalistici propri del cinema. C’è un naturalismo fatale, inevitabile, direi, nel meccanismo stesso del cinema” (Pasolini, 2001: 2892).

²⁵⁰ The works in prose by the “meno abietti neoavanguardisti” (Pasolini, 2000: 130), characterised by very short sections of significative narrative fragments, precede it: Edoardo Sanguineti’s *Capriccio italiano* was published in 1963, Nanni Balestrini’s *Tristano* in 1964, Antonio Porta’s *Partita* in 1967; and even an ex-fellow of Group 63, like Giuseppe Pontiggia, published his highly-fragmented prosimetrum *L’arte della fuga* in 1968.

²⁵¹ See also Vincenzina Levato’s analysis on Pasolini’s experimental research in literature and his relationship with the neo-avant-garde. She observes (2002: 76): “Il rapporto tra Pasolini e la neoavanguardia è soltanto superficialmente conflittuale. Al livello della scrittura esso consente invece di rilevare sostanziali convergenze a partire da *Poesia in forma di rosa*, nei cui ultimi componimenti comincia ad accentuarsi l’idea della poesia come azione (aspetto centrale della poetica dei Novissimi)”.

(2008: 385). Indeed, it was certainly affected by examples such as Robbe-Grillet's *La Jalousie*, a book that was extensively debated in "Nuovi Argomenti" years prior, and even later, thanks to the interest of certain members of Group 63. Consider the similarity, if not manifest imitation, of *La Jalousie* in the following passage about Odetta's looking outside the window at the hospital:

Le punte delle piante – quasi tutte conifere – che affiorano dai sottostanti giardinetti dei primi piani sono settantacinque. Gli angoli delle case trenta; le pareti venti; tre di queste pareti sono di mattonelle di un tenero color nocciola. (996)

A partir de la touffe d'arbres, le côté amont de cette pièce descend en faisant un faible écart (vers la gauche) par rapport à la plus grande pente. Il y a trente-deux bananiers sur la rangée, jusqu'à la limite inférieure de la parcelle. (Robbe-Grillet, 1957: 33)

I also find striking resonances, if not true imitations, with the already-mentioned film *L'Année dernière à Marienbad*.²⁵² Consider the way Pasolini signals Emilia's departure from the bourgeois environment, which is almost a coming out of history, when she approaches the farmstead in the first 'corollary': the description repeatedly mentions poplars, roofs, bell towers,

²⁵² I quote from the famous voice-over variations at the beginning, and purposely from the Italian dubbed version: "In quest'albergo immenso, lussuoso, barocco, lugubre, dove corridoi senza fine succedono ad altri corridoi, silenziosi, deserti, gelidamente decorati da intarsi in legno, stucchi, pannelli intagliati, marmi, specchi neri, quadri dalle tinte scure, colonne, riquadri scolpiti delle porte [...] saloni savraccarichi di una decorazione d'altri tempi, in sale silenziose dove i passi di colui che le attraversa sono assorbiti da tappeti così pesanti, così spessi, che nessun rumore di passi arriva alle sue orecchie, come se persino le orecchie di chi cammina, ancora una volta, lungo questi corridoi, attraverso questi saloni, queste gallerie, in questo palazzo d'altri tempi [...] corridoi trasversali che sboccano a loro volta in saloni deserti, saloni sovraccarichi di una decorazione di altri tempi, in sale silenziose dove i passi di colui che le attraversa (etc.)".

geometrical lines and specific colours (green and red), as in *Marienbad* the voice-over insists on the decoration of the walls.²⁵³

Teorema's temporal configuration is similarly affected by Robbe-Grillet's example. The unfolding of the story in the present tense does not allow a definite understanding of its temporality, though the narrative development remains linear. On the other hand, such a temporal indeterminacy is exhibited in several textual passages: “È una stagione imprecisa (potrebbe essere primavera, o l'inizio dell'autunno: o tutt'e due insieme, perché questa nostra storia non ha una successione cronologica” (895). As it also happens in *Marienbad* or, say, in Bergman's *Persona* (1966), sequences unfold through an ambiguous temporality. Pasolini's novel retains structures and formal motives established from the 1950s and already observable in the French *école du regard* and auteur films.

Moreover, the effects of narrative flattening and foregrounding, produced by Pasolini's use of the present tense and of a disorienting temporality, mingle with his behaviourist style. Ultimately, this kind of narrative discourse entails a para-cinematic narrator. In this feature I find a further relevant trait of *Teorema* and a peculiar remediation of film in fiction. This would be enough to disprove any interpretation of *Teorema* as “un mondo poetico costruito all'insegna del rifiuto dello stile, del rifiuto della forma, mediato continuamente dal suo

²⁵³ “Ma c'è qualcosa di innaturale nel numero immenso di pioppi che incorniciano prati e cielo, avanti, di dietro, a destra, a sinistra; cornici di pioppi grandi come piazze d'armi o spiazzi orientali, oppure stretti e misurati come piante di cattedrali; e che traspaiono gli uni sugli altri all'infinito: una fila sghemba traspare su una fila dritta; una fila dritta su un'altra fila parallela ad essa; e questa su una fila perpendicolare; e poiché il terreno è ondulato, questo trasparire di file di pioppi su file di pioppi, non ha fine; [...] compaiono, qua e là, come mucchietti di cose preziose, i severi campanili con accanto il pasticcio della loro cupola, di un marrone rossiccio, quasi ruggine, e con screziature di sanguigno (il seicento e il settecento di luoghi severi, ora stagnanti ad aspettare la loro fine). [l'Emilia] si avvia verso un casale, che, grande e rossiccio come una caserma, si alza in fondo alle file di pioppi, sul malinconico verde. [...] Ha tutto intorno dei lunghi edifici, bassi, dai tetti rossi, da una parte una grande tettoia, con le stalle (silenziose) all'ombra dei torrioni tondi di due silos, cadenti, severi come quei campanili, che appaiono lontani, oltre le infinite file dei pioppi; [...] arnesi, rosso sangue, che sembrano abbandonati lì per sempre ad arrugginire; e, tra una costruzione e l'altra (fantastiche e minuziose, come caserme principesche del settecento), le lievi prospettive dei pioppi” (Pasolini, 1998b: 984-5).

concetto, esposto al lettore più che narrato, comunicato più che poetizzato” (Benedetti 1998: 170), since the refusal of Form is not a trait of this work yet.²⁵⁴ Rather, the form of *Teorema*-novel remediates the filmic in general and welcomes reminiscences from other films and cinematic fiction, too. Pasolini’s conceptual elaboration of cinema is observable in the literary fiction of *Teorema* as a modulation of the cinematic form.

A final consideration pertains to the narrative contract in *Teorema*-novel. The narrative is kept in external focalisation, but our ambiguous ‘spectatorship’ here, as in the rest of the novel (but also in the film), is enriched by a number of comments and textual marks by the rather omniscient narrator (it is a theorem after all). Consider the use of adverbs of frequency (‘come sempre’, ‘ancora una volta’, ‘fino allora’) in the passage quoted above: these are in stark contrast with a para-cinematic style that relays only the transient present. Throughout the text, such meddling by the narrator creates an internal dialectic with the external focalisation: as already mentioned, temporal indeterminacy is blatantly *said*; the reader is directly *called* to visualise (“Il lettore può immaginare Lucia [...] in un angolo sereno e segreto della casa”; 901), or *invited* to be pleased with a hint and wait for the rest (“il lettore deve accontentarsi di questo accenno, che non dice tutto”; 1046). The novel shows the quest for direct communication between the author and the reader. These are the textual points where the cinematic mode weakens, as the novel cannot borrow from the cinema the ‘address’ to the audience (extremely rare on screen) which, on the contrary, was commonly constitutive of the narrative contract of seventeenth- and eighteenth-century novels. In a way, retrospectively, it is as though Pasolini did not exploit the potential of cinematic writing. And yet, the conceptual usefulness of the cinematic mode in fiction here becomes clearer, because the novel does not read completely ‘as if’ it were a film; its para-cinematic features do appear as a distillation, as an additional set

²⁵⁴ On the other hand, as Pasolini put it a few months before his death in 1975, the idea at the basis of all his films has always been “l’idea formale del film” (2001: 3026).

of qualities which partially inform the text. In conclusion, *Teorema*-novel is inextricably bound with the film version to such an extent that it constitutes a whole and inseparable entity, which results from a communal *poiesis*, as Julien Lingerser (2013) has recently reminded us (Pasolini himself declared that *Teorema* has an amphibologic nature). Moreover, the prosimetrum has also been seen as “nient’altro che la sceneggiatura del film, arricchita e portata a compimento” (Bonfiglio & Orrù 2012: 8). However, Ivaldi is correct in saying that “il romanzo non costituisce affatto la sceneggiatura del film, né l’ipotesto da cui l’adattamento cinematografico avrebbe potuto nascere, né la sua novellizzazione” (2011: 225-6): *Teorema* is a text that is linked with the film and yet is independent at the same time (and different, at any rate, from the actual screenplay that was loosely used during filmmaking). Compared with the broad narrative texture of traditional novels, para-cinematic visualisation in *Teorema* is much more oriented by a literary narrator who imitates the filmic. *Teorema*-novel represents a case of formal imitation of the filmic language and a type of cinematic novel showing strong generic characteristics, which are, notwithstanding, partly moderated by its markedly novelistic narrative contract.

5.6. Antonio Tabucchi, *Piazza d’Italia*

Tabucchi’s (1943-2012) books elude definition. Critics have repeatedly pointed out the peculiar blend of ‘dreamlike’ atmospheres (Trentini 2003) and elements borrowed from the fantastic (Ceserani 1996; Guidotti 1998; Lazzarin 2002). However, the author has also been considered one of the most politically committed writers on the recent Italian cultural scene (Burns 2001). His narratives are connoted by a persisting tendency towards allusion, often arranged in a web of intertextual and intermedial references that are particularly interesting in

the light of cross-disciplinary perspectives. Following *Il gioco del rovescio* (1981) especially, his literary research included a constant reproposal of *alter egos* and heteronyms, two-fold and meta-narratives, erudite cryptoquotes, and techniques of literary disguise. He was influenced by Pirandello and Kafka.²⁵⁵ However, all these elements blend in an interplay of biographical and metaphysical obsessions that primarily stemmed from the artistic practice of the most important author in Tabucchi's life, Fernando Pessoa, of whom he was a discoverer and interpreter. While literary intertextuality is prominent, Tabucchi also resorts to cultivated reuses and reminiscences from other media such as photography, painting and cinema, creating a complex interaction of disparate materials.²⁵⁶ Always attentive and sensitive to a variety of inspirations, Tabucchi explores the boundaries of genres and shapes his own poetics as a refined kind of postmodernism.²⁵⁷ Nives Trentini speaks of "ossessiva tensione iconografica di Tabucchi" (2003: 77) and Remo Ceserani (1996: 140) of a costant, "ammiccante" allusion to

²⁵⁵ In his review to Milan Kundera's *The Unbearable Lightness of Being*, Tabucchi writes: "Un romanzo non è grande se non ha in sé almeno un'interrogazione metafisica. Interrogazione che non è incompatibile con il realismo, come a volte si tende a credere, perché realismo e metafisica possono andare perfettamente d'accordo; anzi, più che il fantastico, che è la negazione della metafisica, è spesso il reale che postula interrogativi metafisici, o che fa scattare quella *metafisica del reale* che il nostro secolo, a partire da Kafka e da Pirandello, ha visitato con i suoi autori maggiori" (Tabucchi 1985c).

²⁵⁶ An erudite summary of reminiscences from the Italian tradition is found in William Spaggiari (2013). See also Monica Jansen (1993) and Remo Ceserani (1997; 2011).

²⁵⁷ See Jansen's (2002) discussion on Italian postmodernism. Ceserani (1997: 203) stresses Tabucchi's "operazioni molto raffinate di intertestualità" and his "costruzioni narrative che mettono in scena il dubbio ontologico della conoscibilità o interpretabilità di ciò che avviene in noi e nel mondo in cui viviamo". Trentini (2003: 25), however, warns: "Definito da molti autore postmoderno per la sua prosa metanarrativa, metatestuale, ontologica, Tabucchi preferisce dichiararsi neoromantico ricordando che molte categorie riconosciute proprie da postmoderno sono espedienti letterari già utilizzati nei secoli precedenti soprattutto per ciò che concerne lo svelamento della finzione".

literary texts and films. Intertextual and intermedial references therefore proliferate in his pages throughout his almost four-decade-long career.²⁵⁸ The writer claimed:

Credo di accogliere nella mia scrittura altri linguaggi, certamente, non sono il primo a farlo. La letteratura dei nostri giorni è una letteratura che è evidentemente molto composita, è fatta di materiali eterogenei che vengono da altre zone. Certamente, credo di avere molta, come dire, familiarità che ho espresso e anche molta connivenza con il cinema, con il fumetto e anche con la canzone popolare, con la canzonetta. (Roelens & Lansots 1993: 154).

The influence of Eisenstein's theories and classic Hollywood films in his first literary effort is particularly evident. Therefore, in this section I will investigate how the encounter with cinema had an impact on Tabucchi's first novel *Piazza d'Italia* (1975) and in which terms the form of the book can be assessed as cinematic.

Piazza d'Italia was composed first in 1973, re-written in 1975 and published in the same year as a 'novel'. In the second edition, published by Feltrinelli in 1993, the subtitle would change to 'favola popolare in tre tempi, un epilogo e un'appendice', as originally conceived by the author.²⁵⁹ The novel is a fable grounded in history because "l'onirico, l'ironia, lo strano, la 'storia nella storia', il 'gioco del rovescio'" (Brizio-Skov, 2002: 53) are recurrent themes within, and act as filters to historical events. As Eleonora Conti (2013) observes, however, the second edition of the book was published in a period when the author had been working on finalising his masterpiece *Sostiene Pereira* (1994), a fact that, beyond the mere editorial necessities, re-

²⁵⁸ See the re-use of themes and forms drawn from particular paintings, such as Diego Velásquez's *Las Meninas* (1656) in *Il gioco del rovescio* (1981), Hyeronimus Bosch's *The Temptation of Saint Anthony* (1490) in *Donna di Porto Pim* (1983), *L'angelo nero* (1991) and *Requiem* (1992a), or Francisco Goya's *Los Caprichos* (1797-1798) and 'the black paintings' in *Sogni di sogni* (1992b). See Rimini (2011) for a detailed analysis of pictorial influences on Tabucchi. See also the case of the photograph blown up in *Il filo dell'orizzonte* (1986) that alludes to Antonioni's *Blow-Up* (1966). The ending of Antonioni's film is also important because of its variations from Julio Cortázar's *Las babas dal diablo* (1959): "J'avais presque vingt-cinq ans, et c'est après la vision de *Blow up* que j'ai délibérément choisi de vivre pour l'écriture". Tabucchi also added that *Rebus* was influenced by Antonioni (De Baecque, 1995: 17-8).

²⁵⁹ All quotes refer to the second edition (Tabucchi 2010).

confirms his interest in history as pivotal and connects Tabucchi's early works to the later ones.

The recurring theme of his first work, in effect, is rebellion against the manifold institutional powers that crush the lives of humble characters (the royal guards and the police, the school, the Church; in a word: 'i padroni'). The literary background of the book is particularly sophisticated. Somewhat neglected by critics compared to Tabucchi's later works, *Piazza d'Italia* links its thematic core with certain milestones of the Italian literary tradition such as Manzoni's *I promessi sposi*, Verga's short story *Libertà* (1882) – where the 'padroni' are metonymically called 'i cappelli' –, Lampedusa's *Il Gattopardo* (1958), or Morante's *La Storia* (1974).²⁶⁰ In *Piazza d'Italia* the story revolves around the acts of rebellion by the members of a Tuscan family, but the narrative tends to exemplify the national context. Crossing a century of Italian history, from the years before Unification to democracy in the aftermath of World War II, the story of these unknown people from the little town of Borgo becomes the story of an entire nation, particularly the story of the poor and oppressed. As is immediately observable, "il titolo avrebbe potuto essere *Piazza di Borgo*, invece è *Piazza d'Italia*" (Brizio-Skov 2002: 21). Thus, Tabucchi's Borgo becomes a sort of 'stage'.²⁶¹ Since the Authority's faces vary and adjust from generation to generation through a leopardesque process ('Se vogliamo che tutto rimanga com'è, bisogna che tutto cambi', Tomasi di Lampedusa, 1996: 39), the only reaction by these rustic and passionate folk is stubborn opposition. The struggle to overcome injustice is focused through their micro-historical perspective (Brizio-Skov 2002) and the

²⁶⁰ It is worth noting that the front cover of *Piazza d'Italia* changes from the first Bompiani edition in 1975 to the second. The two toy soldiers of the first edition are substituted by a photograph of arrests in Turin in 1914, representing in the foreground four *carabinieri* dragging two protesters by the arms. The crowd is barely recognisable in the background, but a bourgeois man stands out in the middle of the picture: thus the three different shapes of the hats (the military *feluca*, the lower-class beret and the middle-class 'fedora') strengthen and mark the class conflict.

²⁶¹ Borgo is somewhat comparable to Vasco Pratolini's *Via Del Corno* in *Cronache di poveri amanti* (1947).

narrative becomes choral. Therefore, the descriptions of the streets, the buildings, the peasants of Borgo, ostensibly Tabucchi's village in Tuscany (Vecchiano), also reflect a tendency to a transfigurative, fabulous account of historical events and daily life, almost as in Fellini's *Amarcord* (1973), but with no satirical tone. Hence the trustworthiness of Zelmira's horoscope or the possibility that the town's widows, horrified by a Nazi massacre, flee from their houses. Moreover, Tabucchi's Borgo is also reminiscent of Gabriel García Márquez's Macondo in *Cien años de soledad* (1967) and becomes the place where the characters' personal paths diverge (to war, to exile) and return. Borgo is surrounded by swamps where men work collecting reeds and traveling salesmen, swindlers and acrobats pass through. These intricate re-uses and analogies are skilfully measured out in the text and give an initial idea of the allusive framework of the novel.²⁶²

On the other hand, allusiveness impacts on narrative linearity and textual clarity, and even informs the inter-relationships between characters, who are rendered through minimalistic, 'flat' characterisation. Men are moved by an irredeemable restlessness against authority and women are the submissive and patient guardians of family values. Plinio's revolutionary spirit leads him to leave his family and twice join Garibaldi's army for the Expedition of the Thousand and the Breach of Porta Pia; but having come back crippled after glorious endeavours, the man is shot dead by a gamekeeper while poaching a coot. His son Garibaldo refuses to set out for the Italo-Abyssinian war like his brothers, Quarto and Volturno (the latter would come back in a coffin bearing the name of his brother Quarto). Thus, Garibaldo shoots himself in the foot to escape conscription; but then he opens fire in turn on another

²⁶² The connection with García Márquez was first noted by Stefano Tani (1990) and Pia Schwarz Lausten (2006); Conti claims (2013: 16): "I punti di affinità fra i due testi sono innumerevoli". For further examples of intertextuality, see Isotta Piazza (2013) on the figure of the reader in Tabucchi and, specifically, in *Piazza d'Italia*, where Garibaldo's rebellion against the school is focused through his refusal to read De Amicis's *Cuore*, so that a counter-narrative is also given, which concerns the education system.

gamekeeper and is forced to flee to Paris and then the US. Having returned to Borgo ten years later, the man is talked into assaulting the municipal granary by the parish priest with socialist ideas, Don Milvio, and is beaten to death by the royal guards who quickly intervene to suppress the revolt. Garibaldo's libertarian ideas are passed down to his son Volturno, who had been named in memory of his uncle, but takes on the name of Garibaldo after his father's death (one may observe Tabucchi's literary gusto in reproposing a play of equivocal names and personalities, drawing from the classical 'comedy of errors'). The central part of the book, the 'secondo tempo', unfolds in Giolitti's Italy and in the Fascist era, when young Garibaldo, an anarchist at heart like his father and grandfather, initially refuses to join the Resistance ("Mi garba fare di testa mia. Non li voglio altri padroni", 88). He would consider the need for a larger counter-movement and embrace the partisanship only after the death of his hunchbacked, communist friend, Gavure. In the third part, in the aftermath of the Liberation, he becomes a capon peddler and a storyteller. Eventually, he too is shot dead on the central monument of the town while addressing his fellows against the police during a post-war protest. This is the scene where the narration begins.

Many of these characters are marked by inexpressible melancholy and profound solitude: the moody Volturno draws bizarre signs on fireplace ash and is affected by the 'Mal del Tempo'; his sister Anita (actually always called Atina), who was "una bambina bruttissima, volturnina e taciturna", turns into such a beautiful girl after her first period as to make her mother consider sending her to the nunnery (Atina would do just that after the suicide of her young lover, the seminarist Ottorino); Melchiorre, the son of Atina and Ottorino, is an aloof man who becomes a fascist "per cercare compagnia" (79) and indirectly wreaks carnage. Whereas men are driven and wound up by historical facts, women find refuge in fantasy and melancholy (Lausten 2006: 121), and are often characterised as blue, much like Plinio's wife, Esterina, whose eyes are "mansueti" and "mogi"; or Esperia, an "equorea creatura" like Montale's Esterina, with sea-like connotations, who weaves "reti di distrazione [...]

perfettamente inutili” like a Penelope waiting for her Quarto (the equivocal play of names again).²⁶³

Such a populated and ambiguous plot is all the more condensed and complicated by a calculated fragmentation of the storyline. Similar to Vittorini’s *Uomini e no*, the narration is divided into 98 short paragraphs or sequences that are organised according to para-cinematic procedures. A general penchant for allusion pervades the short textual sequences: rapid hints or ironic passages allude to historical facts.²⁶⁴ The narrative presupposes a reader who is quite well-versed in Italian history and able to fill the many narrative gaps, as well as the narrator’s sudden reticences, through his or her own inference. Again, high inference and involvement of the reader are characteristics of cinematic writing, i.e. of the narrative contract it establishes. Many years later the writer would claim: “Il lettore merita una sua libertà di interpretazione, della quale ho bisogno anche io quando leggo. Il lettore deve poter partecipare, costruire e intervenire. Deve essere attivo nella lettura” (Borsari, 1991: 12); and in *La gastrite di Platone* he recalls having been “illuminato da un assai intrigante saggio” (Tabucchi 1998: 23-4), referring to Eco’s *Opera aperta*. The openness of *Piazza d’Italia*’s narrative texture hinges on the writer’s cinematic approach.

²⁶³ Note Esperia’s characterisation: “aveva negli occhi inquiete burrasche” (29); “gli occhi di Esperia, sfogati di pianto, erano una bonaccia plumbea” (30); “Avrebbe desiderato scendere in mare rinchiusa in una conchiglia di ricordi, e campare di scogli nel buio acquatico” (36); “L’Esperia campa di granchi” (41) in her “casa marina” (42). Compare with Montale’s initial verses in *Falsetto* (1924). Ironically, in Tabucchi, young Esperia is not fixed in an image of vitalism but disconsolately undergoes the passing of time: “è il salmastro che ti arrugginisce” disse Garibaldo” (42).

²⁶⁴ An example is in the second section of the book, sequence 2, titled ‘Cinque Imberti in un anno’, which alludes to Umberto II di Savoia’s birth on 15th September 1904 (Tabucchi 2010: 54). Consider this passage too: “Lo ha detto quello là diceva Garibaldo, ‘matrice di bellezza’” (60), which sarcastically alludes to D’Annunzio’s claim about war. Brizio-Skov points out (2002: 40-1): “Basta osservare i nomi dei personaggi per capire lo spessore dei riferimenti storici, del resto mai forniti. Quarto, Volturro, Asmara, Anita, si riferiscono rispettivamente alla partenza dei Mille, alla battaglia che decise l’annessione del Regno delle Due Sicilie al Regno d’Italia, combattuta sul fiume Volturro, ad una delle campagne d’Africa e alla comagna di Garibaldi. Si noti anche il titolo del capitolo quarto che riporta la famosa frase pronunciata da Garibaldi a Calatafimi prima dello scontro contro le truppe borboniche: ‘Qui si fa l’Italia o si muore’”.

In a 1995 interview in *Cahiers du cinéma*, Tabucchi emphasised the fundamental influence of the cinema on his early writing and the importance of Eisenstein's essays for the structure of his first book:

Venait de sortir en italien, chez Einaudi, un livre intitulé *Leçons de montage*. Je l'ai lu tout de suite avec avidité [...]. J'ai été très impressionné et très influencé par ce livre. Je me rappelle très bien tout cela: je venais donc d'écrire, de façon tout à fait traditionnelle, le manuscrit de mon première livre, *Piazza d'Italia*, puis j'ai utilisé les enseignements d'Eisenstein pour 'monter' de manière cinématographique la construction de ce roman. C'était à la fois très expérimental et très pragmatique. J'ai découpé chaque 'séquence', chaque 'plan' écrits sur mes feuilles de papier, avec des ciseaux, et j'ai disposé tout cela sur le sol carrelé, en le montant par 'dislocation temporelle', 'succession visuelle', 'rime analogique', 'appel métaphorique', 'correspondance sensorielle', autant de collages que j'avais découvertes en lisant les leçons d'Eisenstein. C'était très amusant, et ressemblait vraiment à un montage, avec des bouts de papier à la place des morceaux de pellicule. Cela m'a pris tout un été, en 1975. (De Baecque 1995: 17-8)²⁶⁵

Piazza d'Italia is playfully allusive to filmic montage, as its narrative articulation is really the outcome of authorial 'cuts' on paper. However, as has been noted in relation to Tabucchi's following works, the cinema often does not contribute to strengthening the effect of realism (Boschi 2007). The daring and rather extreme cuts in *Piazza d'Italia* result in a confusion of plans and periods, names and historical facts. In such a fragmentation and re-articulation of time-space coordinates, one may observe the first seeds of the many allusive plots which would appear more prominently in Tabucchi's subsequent works, for example in the *morceaux choisis* of his *Notturno indiano* (1984). As a consequence, narrative progression and textual coherence have to be construed by means of the cinematic imagination of very collaborative readers. Following the principles of Eisenstein's montage, these sequences act as stimuli, triggering mental associations, thereby inviting the imagination to reconstruct the inter-relations of the parts within the whole and activating the spectator's intellect and feeling (cf. Ejzenštejn, 2012:

²⁶⁵ The correct name of Eisenstein's book in Italian is *Lezioni di regia* (Ejzenštejn 2000). As Rimini (2011: 22) has already noted, Tabucchi's lapsus significantly betrays his main interest in the art of montage.

163-4). Beyond the unfavourable editorial trends that affected the novel-form in the 1970s in Italy, the initial lukewarm reception of the book was likely due to its apparently rambling narration.

Piazza d'Italia's first sequence is actually specified as an 'epilogo' and introduces the style deployed in the narrative. It immediately prompts a two-fold reference to literature and cinema:

Quando Garibaldo, quel giorno da chiodi, si beccò la pallottola in fronte (un forellino capocchioso, nemmeno un foruncolo), mentre stramazzava nel bacinò della piazza, proprio davanti allo Splendor, volle avere l'ultima parola. Ma invece la lingua liberò un gorgoglio squaccheroso che udirono solo i pochi che gli stavano vicino: 'Abbasso il re!'

Il sasso gli sdruciolò di mano e rotolò fino al rigagnolo della fontanella sulla piazza. Sul viso gli rimase ghiacciato un sorriso furbesco, di accidenti a me, perché aveva fatto in tempo ad accorgersi, nel breve tragitto dal monumento alla polvere, che la nebbia della morte gli aveva confuso proprio l'ultima frase. La pallottola che gli aveva cercato la fronte non usciva da un moschetto della guardia regia: il re ormai aveva fatto fagotto e vigeva la costituzione della repubblica fondata sul lavoro. [...] Garibaldo restò solo, col sorriso ironico negli occhi aperti, davanti a tutti quei caschi in fila che si guardavano reciprocamente le pistole abbassate. Asmara sopraggiunse scalza, vestita di un incredibile grembiule con due enormi fragole ricamate sulle tasche, e attraversò la piazza di corsa. (11-2)

As in García Márquez's *Cien años de soledad*, the first scene opens with a character facing the threat of being shot dead. In Tabucchi the character dies, while in García Márquez Aureliano Buendía does not, and it is Arcadio Buendía who is shot dead instead, some chapters later. However, Tabucchi's narrative similarly jumps back to Garibaldo-father and to grandfather Plinio in the subsequent sequences, leaving the first episode unrelated until the end. As has already been stressed by some critics, the effect is surprisingly cinematic.²⁶⁶ The positioning of the final sequence at the beginning recalls well-exploited cinematic procedures (see Billy Wilder's *Sunset Boulevard*, 1950, to quote one example). Nevertheless, the effective contribution

²⁶⁶ Brizio-Skov claims that "la presenza di un Epilogo che spiazza il lettore e fa assomigliare la narrazione a un lungo flashback filmico" (2002: 34). See also Ivaldi (2011) and Rimini (2011).

of the filmic to this beginning has been discussed only vaguely. Flavia Brizio-Skov (2002: 40) merely claims that “L’incipit del romanzo contiene in poche righe una quantità di gesti, movimenti, dettagli e particolari che creano un effetto filmico, visivo, cromatico”. Rather, by complementing the literary reference to García Márquez on the cinematic level, the beginning evokes the famous opening sequence in Orson Welles’s *Citizen Kane* (1941). The reference is not at all transparent, and yet the stone rolling out of the dying man’s hand like the glass sphere from the hand of dying Kane, is a symbol of the character’s family past. In its nude essentiality, the stone represents the constitutive gift passed down to Garibaldo from his ancestors. Moreover, the exclamation he utters in agony (“Abbasso il re!”) includes intertextual meanings, drawing from both *Cien años de soledad*, where Arcadio Buendía cries “¡Cabrones! [...] ¡Viva el partido liberal!” (García Márquez, 1987: 197), and *Citizen Kane*, where Kane mutters ‘Rosebud’. If the similarity with Arcadio Buendía’s words is quite obvious, Garibaldo’s mistake (there was no king by that time) is the expression of a clouded man, within whom the past keeps speaking, as it does in Kane. Regardless of the disparate readings and theories about the actual meaning of ‘Rosebud’, in Garibaldo’s, as well as in Kane’s death, the enigmatic, suspended murmur introduces a narrative about a past that is closely bound to family traumas. When he takes the role as an undercover informer after Gavure’s passing, Garibaldo tells a fellow: “E non mi parlare di politica, che io coi padroni ce l’ho per famiglia, più che per idea” (96). The glass sphere is also mentioned in part two, sequence 11, when Garibaldo is serving as a soldier during World War I and his mother Esperia thinks of him on a winter night (“la neve che veniva giù come nelle palle di cristallo con l’immagine dei santuari”, 63). Certainly, Tabucchi’s and Welles’ scenes do not enjoy perfect symmetry: the first takes place “nel bacinò della piazza”; the other unfolds in the expressionist contrast of light and dark. Yet, in both, a woman in an apron also appears, immediately heading straight for the dead. Still, Tabucchi’s brilliant detail (the enormous strawberries of her apron) adds a touch of crude tenderness referring back to the South-

American writer, thus impressing a decisive trait upon the narrative contract with the reader on the close of the initial sequence and subscribing to a note of García Márquez's 'magical realism'.²⁶⁷ The opening scene of *Piazza d'Italia* is recounted again from another perspective at the end of the book, in its 'terzo tempo'. A note by the narrator introduces its account and explains why it alternates between normal and italicised passages ("due quadri dati in uno, in ragione dell'essere contemporanei", 143): this last sequence formally imitates the cinematic cross-cutting. Garibaldo's communist companion and wife Asmara understands the meaning of an old horoscope of Zelmira's and rushes out of her house hoping to save her husband. The sequence is organised by a specific cross-cutting from the *piazza* to the house, according to Eisenstein's idea of 'metric montage'. Eisenstein believed this kind of montage organises the parts as if they were referring to a musical bar, within which "tension is obtained by the effect of mechanical acceleration by shortening the pieces while preserving the original proportions of the formula" (Eisenstein, 1949: 72). Thus, the narrative focus on Garibaldo on top of the monument is gradually reduced to a final exclamation while the narration 'accelerates' and reaches its climactic ending:

[Asmara] perse una ciabatta sul cancello e per non fermarsi a infilarla buttò via anche l'altra con un calcio.

'Questa, compagni, è l'unica risposta!' gridò Garibaldo.

Asmara sbucò in fondo alla piazza e venne avanti correndo. Faceva ampi cenni con le braccia, disperata (145).²⁶⁸

²⁶⁷ Also compare with the detail of Rebeca's wet hair and floreal dress in *Cien años de soledad*: "Arcadio vio a Rebeca con el pelo mojado y un vestido de flores rosadas" (García Márquez, 1987: 196).

²⁶⁸ Conti (2013: 19) sees further similarities with the episode of Anna Magnani's shooting in Rossellini's *Roma città aperta* (1945).

Therefore, the ‘epilogo’ is actually split into two scenes, allocated at the beginning and at the end of the book, and exhibits all the ingredients that are found throughout the narration. It is specifically enriched by a double evocative reference to literary and cinematic models and introduces a plot that proceeds through the juxtaposition of apparently misplaced sequences. The narration, thereby obtained, triggers an effect of montage and an internal net of back-to-back shifts, flashbacks and flashforwards, short descriptive pauses and multiperspective accounts of crucial events. The narrative is enveloped and gains the generic traits of an epic (Brizio-Skov 2002: 54), confirming the circularity of reasons, actions, and defeats often expressed in the text by means of a triple repetition of similar occurrences: the statue in the middle of the piazza is substituted three times, three generations of rebels are narrated, three women lose their men, three churchmen are mentioned, three foreign countries welcome the fugitives, three wounds affect the men’s feet (the third is Garibaldo’s frostbite), three horoscopes are decisive in the three-part structure of a book that resembles a Möbius strip, as Tabucchi affirms in an interview (Rimini 2011: 29). This cyclic repetition of events and motifs, on the other hand, shows how much Tabucchi drew from Eisenstein, according to whom repetition “may well perform two functions”: to facilitate “the creation of an organic whole”, and serve as a means of developing “mounting intensity” (Eisenstein, 1942: 95).

Tabucchi would soon realise the close affinity between his work and Theo Angelopoulos’s successful film *The Travelling Players* (1975), about the history of Greece from 1939 to 1952. It is unlikely that Tabucchi could have actually been ‘influenced’ by this film because it was

presented at the Festival of Cannes the same year the novel was published.²⁶⁹ Moreover, as an ironic contrast with Angelopoulos's four-hour film, 'concise' is the golden rule that *Piazza d'Italia* in part remediates from film form, as the writer pointed out:

Un'altra cosa che mi ha insegnato il cinema è la concisione. Per conto mio, a tutti i narratori del ventesimo secolo il cinema ha insegnato principalmente due cose: la concisione e il montaggio. Per quanto mi riguarda, credo di aver imparato di più dal manuale di montaggio di Eisenstein che dalla grammatica narrativa di Todorov. (Cattaruzza 2001: 53)

Nevertheless, although Tabucchi practically imitates the filmic montage in his text, it is important to remark that the plot fundamentally evokes one cinematic device, and does not welcome nor imply a further imitation of the film form, especially in relation to its narrative relief. Apart from rare passages and particularly scenic sequences, the narration is led by a persistent use of the *imperfetto*, which distances the story from the narrative foreground. Often the narration only summarises, arguably, much longer episodes. Therefore, it seems that *Piazza d'Italia* is not entirely "modellata sulla temporalità cinematografica" as Thea Rimini claims (2011: 25). The textual segmentation can be considered as para-cinematic by virtue of Tabucchi's montage of paragraphs; however, overall, its narrative relief, which is conveyed by the articulation of verb tenses, is ultimately not cinematic. In other words, the presentation/presentification of the narrative that constitutes the general aesthetic effect of filmic narrative relief is partially frustrated in *Piazza d'Italia*. On the other hand, this is not a

²⁶⁹ "En réalité, ce roman a été le fruit de deux techniques successives: le montage pour finir, inspiré par Eisenstein, et la narration pour commencer, elle aussi influencée par le cinéma puisque j'ai été très impressionné par le film d'Angelopoulos, *Les Voyages des comédiens*. Quand j'ai vu ce film, un peu par hasard, j'ai senti une grande fraternité d'inspiration. Je me suis rendu compte que nous parlions, Angelopoulos et moi, plus ou moins de la même chose. *Les Voyages des comédiens* est un film épique, historique, sur le passé de la Grèce entre 1940 et 1950, réalisé de manière à la fois très simple, en plan fixes, et très complexe, avec beaucoup d'histoires et des destins qui se croisent. J'ai voulu faire la même chose avec *Piazza d'Italia*, une réflexion sur l'histoire de l'Italie, comme un récit épique écrit à la manière brechtienne et monté à la manière d'Eisenstein" (De Baecque 1995: 18).

limit of the novel but an effective choice that strengthens the final meaning of the text. Since nothing substantial changes in the struggle for equality, the recount maintains a flattened perspective throughout, but tends to be put into the *background* because of Tabucchi's use of the *imperfetto*.²⁷⁰ Therefore, in *Piazza d'Italia*, the connections between the sequences can be assessed, if anything, as evoking the cinematic dissolve or the 'fade out/fade in' procedure. Needless to say, however, textual blank spaces indicate blunt separation. Yet the sensation of reading through a continuous dissolving and superimposing of actions and situations seems to sustain the reader's experience of the novel. It is quite a paradoxical effect, and certainly a feature film that similarly unfolded with back-to-back dissolves would become hypnotic and fatally tedious. However, in Tabucchi's understanding, the cinematic dissolve stands out as a decisive filmic device that has been remediated by the twentieth-century literature in general:

Il romanzo del Novecento non è pensabile senza la dissolvenza cinematografica, laddove nel romanzo ottocentesco prevalgono (salvo le eccezioni dei grandi precursori come Nerval) delle descrizioni insostenibili per il lettore contemporaneo. La diversità dei linguaggi narrativi corrisponde a una diversa fenomenologia, determinata dalla nascita e dallo sviluppo del cinema. (Tabucchi 1999)

²⁷⁰ This stylistic outcome is comparable with that of Andrea De Carlo's *Treno di panna* (1981). Based on an autobiographical experience in the US, the approach to the American way of life and work by the young protagonist is completely structured by a mix of commentative and narrative *background* tenses (the *passato prossimo* and *imperfetto*). The narration is almost a chronicle of daily, and mostly ordinary, facts. The narrative relief is kept to the bare minimum and the narrative discourse is utterly flattened whilst regularly distanced. Therefore, the first-person narration is always about to fall into a monotonous and frigid exposition, which seems to thematise the fact that the very experience of the protagonist does not really matter after all. On the contrary, a very cinematic effect is observable in Tabucchi's short story *Cinema*, included in his collection *Piccoli equivoci senza importanza* (1985a), about a film being shot and a love affair between the two leading actors during the phases of filmmaking. The story is written with a pervasive use of the *passato remoto* as a foreground narrative tense, but Tabucchi could have written it in the present tense with similar results. The flattening of the narrative relief contributes to cinematising the narrative; therefore, the influence of the seventh art translates into a thematisation and a formal imitation: Tabucchi writes a *cinema* story and *cinematic* story at the same time.

Still, critics have repeatedly indulged in broadening the reference to the cinema through other, rather loose, approximations. Consider the following claim about *Piazza d'Italia*: “Il romanzo è diviso alla maniera cinematografica in un primo, secondo e terzo tempo. Ciascun tempo è suddiviso in capitoletti numerati e titolati, che assomigliano molto ai fotogrammi di una sequenza” (Brizio-Skov 2002: 43).²⁷¹ Yet, there is nothing specifically cinematic in a three-part structure. Despite often being considered by screenwriters as a good model to build screenplays (Field 2003, 2005), the basic subdivision into presentation, unfolding and conclusion is clearly common to other arts (such as music, theatre and, obviously, literature); and in *Piazza d'Italia*, on the contrary, the three-part order seems to be, if anything, only fictitiously established by the peritext: this order appears subverted by Tabucchi’s montage. Similarly, the welter of short paragraphs cannot be read simply as an aggregation of cinematic stills, otherwise these paragraphs would turn out to be pure ekphrases, and they are not. The narrative fragmentation of the text is to be compared to a chain of cinematic sequences, since a logical unity of action, time and place is normally retained within, and it matches with Tabucchi’s claims and plausible intention.

Tabucchi employs Eisenstein’s logic of montage, allocating sequences according to a principle of formal collision or thematic analogy.²⁷² Thus, from the initial ‘epilogo’ (let us call it sequence 0) to sequence 1, the motif of death is shifted one generation back: Garibaldo’s

²⁷¹ Other attempts to draw the structure of the novel into unfitting categories have resulted in incongruous interpretations: “Non ancora articolata sul sogno, l’affabulazione vi allude giustapponendo i tre tempi del sottotitolo – ‘favola popolare in tre tempi, un epilogo e un’appendice’ – e i ‘due quadri dati in uno, in ragione dell’essere contemporanei’ (sottotitolo del quindicesimo capitolo), tanto che il libro potrebbe essere interpretato come un grande e unico sogno” (Trentini 2003: 150-1).

²⁷² Eisenstein explained montage through Japanese ideogram (“the principle of montage can be identified as the basic element of Japanese representational culture”, 1949: 28), and kabuki theatre, due to its affinity with sound film. Crucially, he was fascinated by the Japanese approach to drawing, which included a fundamental principle of selection and framing of images: “The cinematographic method is used in teaching drawing in Japanese schools. [...] Here’s the branch of a cherry-tree. And the pupil cuts out from this whole, with a square, and a circle, and a rectangle – compositional units: he frames a shot!” (Eisenstein, 1949: 41-1).

father lies “stecchito nella bara” but suddenly starts talking with his son in a surreal scene that reverses the all-too-real initial episode with other precise details; his “braccia conserte” recall the open arms of the first dead; “una benda gialla che gli cresimava la fronte per raccogliere lo sgocciolio giallo” ri-modulates the “forellino capocchioso, nemmeno un foruncolo” in (0). Sequence 2 shifts the narrative two more generations back: from the police to the royal guards, to the newly-inaugurated statue that symbolises the ineluctability of an ever-recurring power, the motifs of authority and its embodiments are focused now. The motif of the revolutionary message that is passed down from father to son is also reposed: in (1) Garibaldo understands that “l’acqua che muoveva il mulino era di tutti come il grano che macinava, che le folaghe che scendevano nei paduli a novembre c’erano per tutti, e che le guardie regie c’erano per ammazzare chi se n’era accorto”; in (2) young Plinio learns from his father that the king is “il nuovo padrone” (who substitutes the Grand Duke of Tuscany); but Plinio is also a child who tries to follow the ceremony in the *piazza* “oltre l’assiepamento di gente”, so that the sequence resumes the setting in (0) and also re-introduces a character standing laterally, whilst at the same time reversing Asmara’s run to Plinio’s fixed position. The sequences are effectively dense with few, but minute, details arranged for specific visual effects. The black ribbon in (0) releases a blanket in (2); the “caschi in fila” looking at their pistols in (0) mutate into “i bandisti cominciarono a incrinare l’attenti” in (2). Plinio has “palline di vetro” in his pockets. His death is told in (8), where the lowered vantage point expressed in (2) is re-introduced: “Garibaldo, alto cinque anni, poteva vedere solo lo stinco monco che si affacciava dal gambale destro”. And so on, with analogic links and reprises between colours (red in particular), sounds and atmospheres (e.g. silence in 8 and 9), repetitions and modulations of phrases, gestures and situations.

Rimini (2011: 25) explains the fragmentation of the texts according to Eisenstein’s theory of the so-called ‘shot units’ and ‘editing units’. However, maintaining this is problematic, for the temporality expressed in a large amount of sequences is irreducible to the scenic, so that it is

nearly impossible to see or infer a presumable ‘shot unit’ in them.²⁷³ This technique does not fit in *Piazza d’Italia* since it is too specifically linked to the scenic progression of film form. If anything, the narration might be assessed according to the auxiliary category of ‘tonal montage’, as this procedure “is based on the characteristic *emotional sound* of the piece – of its dominant. The general *tone* of the piece” (Eisenstein, 1949: 75).

As Rimini rightly observes, though, “la storia è un andirivieni tra passato presente e futuro” and “il cinema permette a Tabucchi di ‘giocare’ con il Tempo” (2011: 23). She touches a key point with her note on his playfulness. This playing with the storytime is part of the open manipulation carried out by the extradiegetic narrator, but it finds an intradiegetic embodiment, too, in Volturno: “del Mal del Tempo gli era rimasto l’uso di invertire i fatti e così raccontava partendo dalla fine e risalendo al principio o mescolando caoticamente le storie più diverse” (27). If one takes Volturno’s ‘Mal del Tempo’ as an ironic allusion to the overarching narrative device of *Piazza d’Italia*, the novel reveals “il suo carattere ‘malato’ rispetto alla ‘sana’ consuetudine della saga familiare” (Rimini, 2011: 24). The intradiegetic figure of Volturno represents, with his ‘Mal del Tempo’, a further allusion to the narrator’s function in structuring the plot and is doubled in the third part by Garibaldo once he becomes a storyteller. Garibaldo’s fabulous stories about “una donna diventata celeste a furia di pensare al mare” (132), or about “un inferno fatto con la benzina” (133), are in fact a *mise en abyme* of the plot, as Brizio-Skov noted (2002: 49). After all, in Garibaldo’s family, “il tempo era sempre corso su fili speciali” (Tabucchi, 2010: 12).

These textual connections are also linked with the colloquial prose of the novel, rich in vernacular nuances and expressionist tensions, and do not remain mere meta-narrative

²⁷³ Cf. the Italian edition: “Se l’atto, l’azione del dramma, si scinde in scene, e la scena nella messa in scena, nel cinema la suddivisione va ancora oltre: la messa in scena si scomponete ora in nodi di montaggio, e i nodi di montaggio in inquadrature. E ogni elemento che segue è subordinato al diretto ‘superiore’” (Ejzenštejn 2000: 95).

embellishments. On the contrary, in this ‘favola popolare’ the paradigm of postmodernism encounters and re-addresses Bertold Brecht’s theories. As Tabucchi maintains, the novel was written “à la manière brechtienne”. Ivaldi points out that:

L’aggettivo va assunto in tutte le sue possibili accezioni: come racconto *engagé*, politico e storico; come invito allo spettatore-lettore a non subire passivamente la rappresentazione ma a straniarsi ed interrogarsi su quanto vede; come sollecitazione a lasciar parlare da sé i fatti rappresentati e infine come suggerimento di frammentarietà, per cui ogni parte della storia contribuisce al tutto ma conserva un proprio valore episodico indipendente. (Ivaldi, 2011: 137)

With its micro-historical perspective, organised through a para-cinematic montage, *Piazza d’Italia* launches Tabucchi’s literary experience under the aegis of a principle of ambiguity, reversibility and dislocation of medial references. Unlike nineteenth-century novels with their totalising and centripetal plots, Tabucchi’s fragmented plots, already set out in *Piazza d’Italia*, reflect his general idea of a non-totalising literature and support his relativistic worldview.²⁷⁴ Through montage, in conclusion, cinema offered Tabucchi a formal principle of narrative construction and imposed itself as a model of multiperspectivism, time manipulation and visual rhetoric. In *Piazza d’Italia* the narrative welcomes cinema as an intermedial reference inasmuch as it evokes the film form and imitates the technique of montage. The narrative contract it establishes with the reader is a para-cinematic one but it is counterbalanced by the use of background tenses and the literary unfolding of the narration.

²⁷⁴ The writer champions “una mancanza di superbia, una visione non totalizzante del mondo e un senso del relativo abbastanza salutare per un’attività come quella letteraria che, com’è noto, mira sostanzialmente all’Assoluto. Se la letteratura è un tentativo di conoscenza del senso dell’uomo su questo paziente veicolo che ci trasporta da qualche migliaio di anni, non è disdicevole che essa provi a guardarlo con la consapevolezza del relativo, del non sistematico, del non totalizzante” (Tabucchi 1985b: 3).

5.7 Elsa Morante, *Aracoeli*

Begun in 1976, Elsa Morante's (1912-1985) *Aracoeli* was published in 1982 and is an example of the pervasive thematisation of the cinema that, overall, does not support an implicit formal imitation of the film form.²⁷⁵ The story interweaves two temporal threads through the narrating voice of an autodiegetic character.²⁷⁶ The main character Manuele brings his past to light while recounting the journey he is making from Italy to Spain to get a deeper understanding of his life. His "monologo sregolato" (1066) in the present includes the recollection of his childhood and familiar events in Rome under Fascism and during the war. This period was characterised by the closest of bonds with his lowbrow mother Aracoeli in their first home in the neighbourhood of Monte Sacro ('Totetaco' in Manuele's first childish understanding). This idyllic period vanished after Aracoeli's marriage to his father, a high-ranking member of the military, and their consequent move to the 'Quartieri Alti', the place that substantiates the newfound status of the family.

Manuele's journey to Spain becomes a sort of archaeological trip: as the narrator claims, it is "una pulsione disperata" to search for Aracoeli, who died young and in disgrace, "in tutte le direzioni dello spazio e del tempo, fuorché una a cui non credo: il futuro" (1044). In the first pages of the novel, having introduced his family background in the *imperfetto* ("Mia madre era andalusa"; "Io somigliavo a lei nella carnagione e nei tratti"), the focus of his narration is gradually brought to the here and now ("Sono passati trentasei anni da quando mia madre fu sepolta nel cimitero di Campo Verano"; "Da circa due mesi io dispongo di un impiego avventizio in una piccola azienda editoriale"), so as to make clear the exact time of the

²⁷⁵ All quotes from the 'Meridiani' edition (Morante 1990).

²⁷⁶ 'Autodiegesis' means that a story is narrated by a homodiegetic character and mainly centered on him or herself (Genette, 1972: 253; 1980: 245).

narrative enunciation on 2nd November 1975.²⁷⁷ However, the *imperfetto* is immediately resumed, and for the rest of the novel it shapes Manuele's account of his family's background in alternation with the present tense. The present tense is occasionally used in shorter passages, and especially in the first half of the book, to introduce sudden visions of his past during his actual journey to Andalusia. Therefore, a peculiar allocation of the narrative temporality follows the use of the verbs: whereas large narrative parts are conveyed in the *imperfetto*, important scenes emerge from such a narrative background, either in the present or in the *passato remoto*, by virtue of their 'foregrounding' functions. However, a general presentification and flattening of the narration, required for a para-cinematic experience, is constantly frustrated. As the narrative unfolds, the configuration of tenses in *Aracoeli* evidently aims at producing a sharp narrative relief and Morante exploits a range of stylistic solutions to render her story quite novelistic overall. In *Aracoeli*, Manuele's interior time is altered ("È un fatto – ormai provato – che il mio tempo di rado corrisponde al tempo 'normale'", 1203), but only seemingly reproduces a cinematic flow of images where meaningful sequences are aggregated by montage; in fact, a para-cinematic style is rarely observable in his monologue. Rather, since the transmission of the diegetic past can intrude, interact or coexist with the present, the narrator's discourse seems to convey "una percezione opaca e delirante che confonde i periodi", as Rosa (1995: 306), repeated by Ivaldi (2011: 177), puts it, especially when he recollects memories in rapid sequences. Nevertheless, the narrative does not express the illusion of a levelled, non-distanced temporality that is typical of movies by virtue of the demonstrative quality of the film medium. In Morante's novel, the reader does not have difficulty grasping which temporality is expressed by the written medium: very traditionally, a

²⁷⁷ Note the extratextual coincidence between Manuele's journey during the 'Ognissanti' weekend and the weekend of Pasolini's death. Rosa adds (1995: 356): "La data del Ponte di Ognissanti è surdeterminata anche narrativamente: non solo coincide con il compleanno del protagonista [...] ma segna anche l'anniversario del matrimonio morganatico dei genitori".

diegetic present where the narrating ‘I’ recollects his and his family’s past, as already in *Menzogna e sortilegio* (1948) and *L’isola di Arturo* (1957).²⁷⁸

The cinema stands out as a metaphorical reference for Manuele’s unbridled imagination. In particular, young Manuele’s solitary and repressed sexuality is mediated by the cinema. Homoerotic and masochistic impulses are moulded and described as projected on a mental screen. It is important to note that such visions are given in the past and mostly in the *imperfetto* because they are recounted, and their iterativity is also expressed:

M’era dato pure d’intendere, dalle chiacchiere degli altri, che non ero il solo a evocare, per quegli esercizi d’amore, delle visioni proprie, le quali, fra i compagni, venivano dette il loro *cinematografo*; ma dubito che il *cinematografo* degli altri somigliasse al mio. (1126)

All’inizio, io ero solo sulla scena: personaggio impreciso e senza faccia, rannicchiato in una aspettazione che si prolungava ad arte, per fomentare la promessa dello spasimo [...] E allora l’Altro arrivava. [...] E ogni minima azione di questa sequenza veniva proiettata, sul mio schermo, col rallentatore. [...] Tale nuovo copione, più ancora del precedente, si replicava con ossessiva monotonia, sempre lo stesso. (1130)

Cinema is thematised in relation to masturbation, but these passages can also be interpreted as real evocations in the very technical meaning introduced above: they describe the functioning of the filmic memory machine.

Moreover, visions and memories undergo a process of *mise en abyme*, as also in the case of Manuele’s recollection of his “fantasia drogata” by hashish one evening in the past when he lay in bed and “sul vetro della finestra, incominciò a svolgersi, come viva, una piccola scena in movimento, simile nelle tinte alle miniature, o alle vetrate delle cattedrali” (1214). The past

²⁷⁸ On the centrality of memory in Morante see Rosa (1995: 302): “*Aracoeli*, nel consueto ri-uso di immagini elisiane e arturiane, ribadisce la genesi mnesica dell’estro inventivo”. Manuele re-affirms the power of imagination which builds upon memories: “può sembrare a volte che le memorie siano prodotte dalla fantasia; mentre in realtà sempre la fantasia è prodotta dalle memorie” (1186); in another passage he also says that imagination grows “nei nostri depositi sotterranei, creando a nostra insaputa una serra mostruosa, che infesta coi suoi parassiti il nostro intero campo” (1406), using a different metaphor that highlights his disturbed personality.

sometimes arises through actual cues, gestures or objects (here, a glass of *chinchón*, a strong Spanish liquor), in a narrative construction that recalls Proust's "involuntary memory".²⁷⁹ Thus, not only present cues and sensations are able to trigger past memories, but also past memories can reactivate bygone sensations in the present; and all these reminiscences can relate to different arts as well:

E la mia fantasia drogata si lusingò, per una sera, di quella piccola epifania: tanto che oggi pure, qui a Gergal, la reminiscenza me ne riporta un sentore d'incensi magici. Però il proiettore si sposta; e una seconda reminiscenza dà il cambio alla prima, come nel teatro d'Opera giapponese, dove il dramma si alterna con la farsa. (1215)

As emerges, the intermedial reference to cinema translates in Manuele's narrative discourse mostly explicitly ("il proiettore") through thematisation. While the narrator embodies, as he says, a cinematic 'dream machine', he does not substantially enact an implicit imitation of the filmic language in his recounting. Films, as well as literature, often embed framed stories and make use of flashbacks: fades and superimpositions, close-up camera movements on a character's still and intense gaze, captions, and intradiegetic or voice-over announcements are common expedients to shift the filmic narration to the past. In all these cases, sometimes also in combination with further visual marks that signal the temporal transitions (e.g. sepia tone, warm colours, or black and white), the 'window' on the past (also a recent past) proceeds in the forced running-time of the film and in its present 'tense'. In *Aracoeli*, while Manuele's frequent visions shed light on his past by replicating the same structural pattern used in many

²⁷⁹ See Bruno Pischedda (2000: 399): "Pochi romanzi del tardo novecento italiano hanno guardato a Proust con tanta insistenza quanto *Aracoeli*". Gragnolati observes Manuele's resuming of sensory memories through the concept of resurrection, drawing on the meaning it takes in the treatment of corporeality in Dante's *Commedia*. In *Aracoeli*, "il concetto di resurrezione mi interessa innanzitutto perché riconosce l'importanza del corpo nella sua materialità fisica e lo pone al centro del romanzo come portatore della memoria e della storia di ciascuno tanto nel suo carattere intersoggettivo quanto nella sua unicità" (2013: 116).

films, the modulation of this cinematic feature only goes halfway. The reader feels that Manuele's account is a verbal one. In fact, film terminology and cinematic techniques remain mere metaphors and similes that he voices: "queste altre rimembranze potrebbero essere, come le prime, effetti di fotomontaggio. Esse galleggiano rotte e sfocate sui fondi della mia realtà come salme su una palude caliginosa" (1328). Similarly, cinematic techniques in several passages are metaphorised and embedded alongside other rhetorical devices.

Another interesting case in point is the episode of the escape from the convent during the Resistance. Young Manuele is momentarily captured and ridiculed by partisans during a fake trial ("Per quanto bendato io *vedevo* adesso la scena del 'Tribunale'", 1240). A possible reminiscence of Vittorini's *Conversazione in Sicilia*, the scene shows blindfolded Manuele before two partisans speaking: "due voci: la magra e la grassa" (1231). This episode faded in Manuele's memory after only a few weeks, but it resurfaces thirty-one years later with a new sharpness, thanks to alcohol. Following a second glass of *chinchón*, Manuel becomes a bit hazy and envisions a rambling dialogue with an alter ego that ends in Aracoeli's death. The narrative motifs of drugs, alcohol and numbness return later: Manuele wonders whether the visions that "si proiettano davanti con la forza delle allucinazioni" are "scherzi di un *trip* andato a male" (1344) and confirms that he is "traballante un poco" (1425) because of his drink at Gergal. More importantly, the theme of sight, willingly obscured or prevented, is key for its Oedipal implications: with a gesture burdened by regressive self-defence, short-sighted Manuele removes his glasses "quando non c'è nulla che [gli] importi vedere" (1058); similarly, the gesture is replicated on the bus to Gergal: "Sul principio del viaggio – forse per meglio iniziarmi alla mia clausura – io con atto quasi involontario m'ero tolto gli occhiali" (1199).

After all, for him to live means “l’esperienza della separazione” (1058).²⁸⁰ The equivocal interaction of visionary and rational reconstruction, which is not unusual in Morante, is one of the leading threads of the narrative. In a metafictional passage at the beginning, Manuele confesses that this process is enduring: “questa sorta di monologo sregolato, che vado qui recitando a me stesso, io l’ho imbastito, fino dall’esordio, coi fili dell’equivoco e dell’impostura” (1066).

Dreamlike scenes are the discursive parts that display a seeming cinematic quality, because the alternation of the images occurs in the continuity of the diegetic present. Here the present tense is used to narrate actual scenes in Genette’s sense, i.e. through a conventional coincidence between the time of story and discourse. However, in large parts of the novel, I do not see “frequenti fenomeni di stacco cinematografico” as Ivaldi claims (2011: 178), just because transitions in time and space are, on the contrary, voiced by the (very) human narrator in the first person. The embedding of blank spaces between parts of the discourse is such a common practice in literature so as not to automatically recall the technique of montage – especially in this novel, since these blanks almost never separate clear-cut scenes. Similarly, temporal jumps were not invented by the cinema, but have long been exploited in literature. Overall, *Aracoeli* perfectly illustrates the difference between two kinds of techniques: the analepsis/prolepsis (which have always been employed vastly from epic poems to contemporary novels), and the flashback/flashforward (which are cinematic techniques used occasionally in literature). Particularly, in *Aracoeli* four flashbacks anticipate the later full

²⁸⁰ Pischedda sees “un richiamo alla psicoanalisi, mai, nelle opere maggiori della Morante, tanto insistente e didascalico. È lo stesso Manuele a mettere sull’avviso il lettore in una dura apostrofe al fantasma della madre: ‘Se tu avessi imparato le scienze positive dell’anima, potresti almeno riconoscere i tuoi crimini materni. Si tratta, ormai, di nozioni elementari’” (2000: 401).

description of the relative scenes and acquire a proleptic function in Manuele's discourse; however, these flashbacks are, as usual, explicitly *recounted*.²⁸¹

Occasionally, some cinematic techniques, such as superimpositions and fades, are rendered in the text. These mark the few instances where a weak implicit imitation of the cinema can be recognised. The following excerpt reads as a master shot, framed by a wall mirror and followed by a POV shot from close-range:

Ora, la primissima visione postuma di me stesso, che fa da sfondo a tutti i miei anni, si presenta alla mia memoria (o magari pseudo-memoria?) non direttamente ma riflessa dentro quella specchiera, e inquadrata nella nota cornice. [...]

Ci si vede, seduta su una poltroncina di peluche giallo-oro (a me già nota e familiare) una donna con al petto un lattante. Essa appoggia al letto un piede nudo, e in terra, sul tappeto francese, c'è una babbuccia rovesciata. [...]

Ecco, e da questo punto svanisce la specchiera con la sua cornice. Adesso, da quella scena specchiata che pareva dipinta mi si fanno vicini, sviluppandosi in concretezza fisica, gli intimi particolari, come se il me stesso di oggi riavesse le medesime pupille di quella creaturina estatica appesa alla mammella. Può darsi che sia uno dei miei ricordi apocrifi? Nel suo lavoro continuo, la macchina inquieta del mio cervello è capace di fabbricare delle ricostruzioni visionarie – a volte remote e fintizie come morgane, e a volte prossime e possessive, al punto che io mi incarno in loro. Succede, a ogni modo, che certi ricordi apocrifi dopo mi si scoprono più veri del vero.

E tale è questo. Di fra le palpebre socchiuse del me stesso di allora io rivedo la mammella di lei, snudata e bianca, con le sue venine azzurre e intorno al capezzolo un piccolo alone di colore arancio-rosa. (1049-50)

The image of breastfeeding is key and recurring in the novel and has been extensively explored by critics.²⁸² To stick to the topic at hand, these sudden memories expressed in the present tense are structured as foreground moments: Maupassant-like phatic expressions such as ‘Ora,’ and ‘Ecco,’ (cf. Weinrich, 1978) introduce the foregrounded scene and restrict the narrative focus to a key image or situation. However, it is not negligible that, here, after their

²⁸¹ “*Qualche lampo all'indietro*. Estate 1945. Mio padre, alla mia prima e ultima visita [...] ...Poco prima, lo stesso giorno. La risata simile a un verso di gallina della zia Monda [...] ...E più indietro, verso il 1940, a Roma, in un tardo pomeriggio domenicale [...] ...E indietro, ancora più indietro nel tempo. Il 4 novembre di 43 anni fa, ore tre pomeridiane. È il giorno della mia nascita.” (1057).

²⁸² For an in-depth analysis of the theme of breastfeeding, its Dantesque reminiscences and its implications in the light of Kristeva's theory, see Sara Fortuna & Manuele Gragnolati (2008; 2009a) and Gragnolati (2013). See Agnès Morini (2006) on the theme of the mirror.

first appearance, much broader accounts of related past situations unfold in background tenses. Ultimately, there is no para-cinematic narrator in this novel. Not only does the narration unfold in the first person traditionally, but also the general narrative organisation does not follow any intent to show the events by pure representation. This was never Morante's purpose, in any novel. The fundamental narrator behind the organisation of the diegesis in this novel has little to do with the cinema. Thus, on the one hand I agree with Ivaldi when she claims:

Seguendo, a distanza di molti anni, i suggerimenti delle prime teorie del cinema, la Morante torna a guardare all'onorismo del cinema per istituire esplicitamente un confronto fra questo mondo e quello della psiche, sospesa fra sogno, memoria e visione, e per assumere il processo meccanico di riproduzione dell'immagine a emblema di una comunicazione forzosa che avviene per lampi, attraverso canali non verbali, dunque non sottoposti al vaglio gerarchizzante della ragione. (Ivaldi 2011: 174)

Yet, I reject her subsequent jump to the following conclusion: “ciò che rende *Aracoeli* un’opera veramente di taglio cinematografico, dunque al di là dell’uso metaforico che rimanda al cinema, è soprattutto l’adozione esibita delle tecniche compositive mutuate da quel linguaggio” (Ivaldi 2011: 177); an idea that she certainly picks up, and pushes too far, from Giovanna Rosa’s seminal study.²⁸³

Aracoeli cannot be referred to as a cinematic novel *tout court*. As soon as someone says ‘just like at the cinema’, you are not automatically in front of the screen, you are listening. Despite

²⁸³ Moreover, in Ivaldi Rosa’s essay remains too often unquoted and only barely reworded in crucial passages. Compare with the same expression, among others, in Rosa (1995: 303). However, whereas the cinematic quality of the novel appears to be a very limited component in Rosa’s extended analysis of all textual features, in Ivaldi the same idea sounds misleadingly overstated. Indeed she cannot help revealing a few pages later that the initial part of the book marks “uno scarto netto rispetto alla media della prosa del romanzo, tesa ed alta, infarcita di riflessioni, sensazioni, commenti e sfumature di pensiero che al cinema sarebbero negate. Come se alla prima apparizione cinematografica della materia narrativa, al suo affiorare per fotogrammi perduti, seguisse una sua distesa esposizione, più decisamente letteraria” (2011: 182). At any rate, Rosa had already pointed out the subdivision of the book in two parts: “L’atto di lettura [...] si cadenza su un ritmo meno rapsodico perché si modificano le strutture profonde del paradigma romanzesco” (1995: 307).

its peculiar thematisation of cinema, *Aracoeli* fundamentally remains shaped by literary and traditional structures, clearly linking with the genre and forms of *Familienroman*. Unlike the narration in *La Jalousie* (expressed by the husband-voyeur, the *je-néant*), the narration here is clearly recounted. The narrator *tells* the story much more than *showing* it as if recorded and relayed by an impassive camera. As in *Quaderni di Serafino Gubbio operatore*, while reading we scarcely experience a sort of cinematic flow of images. Like in Pirandello, however, cinema is included within the broader themes of mechanisation and massification, often illuminated in the text by a lateral light. The novel, in fact, displays a great disillusion about the progress of history and the political turmoil of the Seventies. Some critics have emphasised Morante's psychological *pesanteur* and read the novel as a palinody (Rosa, 1995) or a parody (Garboli 1995) of her previous production, the bitter fruit ripened in a period of profound discouragement, also following the death of her friend Pier Paolo Pasolini; Pischedda (2000) stresses Morante's horror for a social background that points to Pasolini's *Petrolio* (1992). *Aracoeli*'s storyworld reflects the wounds of a collapsing civilisation, because "nello scenario apocalittico degli anni ottanta, il 'senso del sacro' è stato distrutto dai 'sinistri macchinismi' di una tecnologia onnipervasiva" (Rosa 1995: 321).²⁸⁴ Manuele's Spanish journey is bound to end on a desert steep in El Almendral, "baratro di pietrame e macigni" (1428). The idea of an abysmal world, petrified by the atomic boom recurs:

Si direbbe che gli esseri umani rifiutano, oggi, il Dio che parlava il linguaggio del silenzio. In tutte le loro azioni quotidiane: lavarsi, nutrirsi, lavorare, accoppiarsi, camminare o star fermi; e dovunque: nelle case e nei caffè, negli alberghi, nei bordelli e negli asili, nelle carceri e negli uffici, nelle automobili e nei treni e negli aerei; dovunque e sempre,

²⁸⁴ A number of mechanical sounds and piercing noises appear in the text. Rosa (1995: 313) summarises the epistemological background of the novel: "L'universo romanzesco in cui si muove il protagonista di *Aracoeli* è formato da macerie e rovine, resti di un'esplosione la cui eco si prolunga in rimbombi e frastuoni altrettanto sconvolgenti". See also Filippo La Porta's recent observations (2012: 89-97) on the concepts of 'sacred' and 'reality' in Morante and Pasolini.

individui e masse; vivono soggetti a questa Maestà elettrica, rimbambita e sinistra, infuriante nelle sue casse di plastica da cui escono ‘lampi di voci e tuoni’. È un ultimo Dio del pianeta industriale, forse teso a vendicare la furia assordante delle macchine la degradazione e lo strazio. (1198)

On the other hand, since cinema is metaphorised in *Aracoeli* as a medium able to open an unusual window on the past, it works as a medial reference for the narrator’s “fantasmagorie precarie” (1177-8). Indulging in his “natura scissa” (1180), Manuele undergoes such visions passively and seems subjected to the random re-surfacing of his past, against which he is powerless. Thus, the fragmentary clips of his bygone days, suddenly enacted by his imagination, also seem to thematise the rather stereotypical old claims about the passivity of spectators before the moving images. Therefore, cinema is not thematised that much as an art or industry, though some references to star-system actors or film genres are observable, as seen in Morante’s previous novels (the actors are mentioned as models of behaviour for some characters; Andalusia’s landscape recalls the scenery of some *spaghetti-westerns*); on the contrary, cinema is particularly thematised in relation to filmmaking and spectatorship, as well as its technical features and mechanical apparatus. Morante addresses dominant discussions of the cinema taking place in the 1970s around Jean-Louis Baudry’s idea of cinematic apparatus and his discussions of the spectator’s identification and voyeurism (Baudry 1974). It is rather unlikely, however, that Morante had come in touch with these ideas. In his recent survey on Morante and the cinema, Marco Bardini (2014) does not make any related references. Yet, the writer might have drawn on already established discourses rooted in Bergson’s philosophy as well as on her direct experience of the cinema screen. The cinema appears as a dream machine like in its early years. Manuele often points to his cinematic imagination in such terms:

Io sono sempre stato una fabbrica enorme di sogni. E se è vero che il nostro tempo finito lineare è in realtà il frammento illusorio di una curva già conchiusa: dove si ruota in eterno sullo stesso circolo, senza durata né punto di partenza né direzione; e se poi

davvero ogni nostra esperienza, minima o massima, è là, stampata su quel rullo di pellicola, già filmata da sempre e in proiezione continua; allora io mi domando se anche i sogni si iscrivano in quel conto. E se il mio rullo, preso tutto insieme, risulterebbe un film dell'orrore, o una comica. (1406-7)

This passage recalls Pasolini's ideas of reality as cinema and of montage as a procedure able to confer meaning to it (cf. Pasolini, 2000). "Molto pasolinianamente del resto, Manuele concepisce se stesso come *Axis Mundi* e protagonista della Passione. Costante è la sua sensazione di essere non *al*, ma 'il centro dell'universo'", as Pischedda observes (2000).²⁸⁵ On a more positive level, however, Manuele's passivity seems to be circumscribed. An active, subjective attempt to construe the past and explain the present is observable. Whereas scenes and figures project themselves before his eyes "con la forza delle allucinazioni" (1344), the act of recounting that makes *explicit use* of montage and cinematic techniques counterbalances Manuele's inertial condition, although it occurs in the forms of "un'autodafé, un'esibizione oscena", as Cesare Garboli puts it (1995: 199). Thus, if some critics have emphasised the character's passiveness and voyeurism (Rosa 1995: 304; 313) and that *Aracoeli* is a "romanzo di emarginazione, sorta di proseguimento in nero, anziché palinodia dell'*Isola d'Arturo*" (Pischedda 2000: 408), others critics, such as Sara Fortuna and Manuele Gragnolati, have drawn on Kristeva's notions of 'semiotic' and 'symbolic' realms to affirm a substantially positive process of emancipation in Manuele. His physical and existential journey can be assessed more positively; his role in shaping the narrative garners new value. While rebuilding his past by virtue of 'apocryphal' visions, he garners "un'altra prospettiva sulla realtà, che è

²⁸⁵ See Charles Leavitt (2012) on Morante's dialogue with Pasolini in the shaping of her own realism in *L'isola di Arturo*. See Gragnolati (2013) for a fascinating intertextual exploration of themes and forms in Dante, Pasolini and Morante. See Marco Bardini (2014) about Morante's contribution to Pasolini's cinema.

anche un aumento di vitalità” (Gragnolati 2013: 148).²⁸⁶ Moreover, in Morante’s last novel, film form provides a powerful narrative expedient to remodulate customary patterns, such as the mother-child dyad, which was already relevant in *La Storia* (cf. Wehling-Giorgi 2013).

Nevertheless, Morante’s position about cinema long remained ambiguous. In her reply (*Sul romanzo*) to the enquiry promoted by ‘Nuovi Argomenti’ in 1959, having explained her hostility towards the neorealist ‘documentarism’ and her puzzlement about the distinction between ‘subjective’ and ‘objective’ novels, Morante added that “riguardo all’ipotesi che il romanzo *volti definitivamente le spalle alla psicologia*, essa mi sembra assurda nella sua stessa enunciazione, perché il romanzo è, in se stesso, la *proiezione di una psicologia nel mondo*” (Morante, 1990: 1504), where the psychology she champions is that of the author, too. She also sarcastically remarked:

Quanto alla *realità puramente visiva* predicata da una giovane scuola francese odierna (detta, se non mi sbaglio, *du regard*) confesso di non avere ancora letto nessuna delle opere prodotte da questa scuola; ma la sua tesi programmatica, così com’è pronunciata nella presente inchiesta, mi ispira qualche perplessità. Mi domando, difatti, per chi possa darsi mai una *realità puramente visiva*, se non per una macchina fotografica; e in nome di quale ‘valore di verità’ l’organismo, tutto altrimenti articolato e complesso, di un romanziere, debba costringersi a imitare il lavoro di un povero meccanismo ottico di bottega. (1509)

About twenty years after this claim, Morante inserted cinema with its techniques and suggestions into her highly cohesive and coherent narrative system and writing practice. However, she did not include it as a cinematic style. The thematisation of cinema in *Aracoeli*, as an intermedial reference that does not substantially re-formalise the source medium, may be seen as the result of a partial reconsideration. Under this light, the modulation of formal

²⁸⁶ Note that, according to Morante’s conception of literature, Manuele’s process is the process characterising any novel, which must include both reality and imagination (or fable) to retain a “*verità poetica*” (Morante, 1990: 1498).

suggestions and lexical borrowings in her latter ‘paper cathedral’ cannot be seen merely as a refurbishment and modernisation with new materials. As Rosa puts is:

Ormai non c’è più nessuna impalcatura ‘architettonica’ a sorreggere il discorso rievocativo perché è venuta meno l’antica fiducia di poter inscrivere entro l’opera il ‘sistema del mondo e delle relazioni umane’. [...] Dell’antica ‘cattedrale’, sono rimaste unicamente ‘le vetrate, le scene isolate’, disposte per di più secondo un montaggio che ne sottolinea la discontinuità. (1995: 305-6)

However, despite the substantial differences, Manuele’s recollection is comparable to Elisa’s writing in *Menzogna e sortilegio*, which was connoted as an ‘aetiological’ process (see also Serafino Gubbio in Chapter 4). Manuele does not aim for an objective reconstruction of a vanished past; he repeats the same internal enquiry already performed by Elisa, who was “rather committed to achieving a consistent tale of the parental causes of her traumas and pain as a child and then of her stranded life as an adult” (Porciani, 2015: 403).²⁸⁷ Therefore, a similar motivation moves both Elisa and Manuele: one as an architect around the nave of her magnificent ‘building’, the other as a “vecchio borghese, inutile, laidò” (1101) treading on the shredded plot of his life. In Elisa there is a “constructive use of writing as a therapy” and the novel is “the first aetiological stage in her autobiographical performance” (Porciani, 2015: 403-5); similarly, Manuele aims at being cured of Aracoeli (“guarire di lei”, 1065).²⁸⁸ In the end the mother-nymphomaniac is metaphorically ‘killed’ by his son (Wehling-Giorgi 2013: 199). Moreover, Aracoeli herself gains a more positive connotation for her “queer

²⁸⁷ Gragnolati sees in Manuele’s trip “verso un’Andalusia trasformata nel regno dei morti [...] una ricerca che faccia riemergere l’Eden dell’infanzia” (2013: 131). Conversely, for Rosa, Manuele’s trip is “una *Bildung* all’inverso” (1995: 309); in Rosa’s interpretation, “il romanzo dell’82 non racconta la storia di un caso clinico, esemplifica la tragedia della femminilità” (325). Other scholars have endorsed nuanced interpretations and followed different critical paths, see Fortuna & Gragnolati (2009b). See also Aracoeli’s attempt to overturn the patriarchal order, discussed by Adalgisa Giorgio (1994).

²⁸⁸ Note that the journey began with this purpose: “Io cerco oggi di nascondere a me stesso che questa seconda Aracoeli è anch’essa mia madre, la stessa che mi aveva portato nell’utero; e che lei pure sta insediata in ogni mio tempo schernendo la mia ridicola pretesa di ricostruirmi, di là da lei, un nido normale” (1066-7).

performance” (Gragnolati 2013) based on language and corporeality, which illuminates her identity. The woman’s ultimate act of rebellion, before self-retiring to the brothel of the ‘Donna-Cammello’, is condensed in her ungrammatical letter (1384).²⁸⁹ Since the entire narrative expresses Manuele’s latent attempt to rehabilitate her mother’s disgrace, the final visionary encounter with Aracoeli’s ghost is the final point of “una ‘resurrezione carnale dei morti’ già avvenuta ‘tornando indietro’ e riattivando le tracce del passato contenute nel corpo” (Gragnolati, 2013: 136).²⁹⁰

For both Elisa and Manuele, the reconciliation with themselves gains a new narrative centrality compared to the account of their past, even if Manuele’s reconciliation is uncertain. In *Menzogna e sortilegio*, Elisa’s recollecting was sustained by the sounds and whispers of her dead relatives. Her writing was only apparently a passive and forced act, but it proved instead to be a subjective work of imagination. In *Aracoeli*, the film form is the medium that acts as a reference in this process; the cinematic imagination is the crucial means through which memories are brought back to light: it is Manuele’s “nervo primordiale della visione” (1337) that brings him back to Aracoeli’s body. The man, in fact, described as “nemmeno una vera checca”, “maschio fallito” (1096), “ammasso di carne matura” (1170), “canuto Narciso, che non crepa”, the target of “dileggi, ribrezzi, ricatti, percosse e linciaggi” (1172) will identify his witnessing of the ‘primal scene’ of his parents as the source of his troubles (1341-2).

Ultimately, with its intense thematisation of cinema, *Aracoeli* seems to stipulate a para-cinematic narrative contract with the reader. Compared to Morante’s previous novels, the

²⁸⁹ As Gragnolati observes, having traced the evolution of the linguistic dimension of both mother and son: “Aracoeli compie un gesto intrinsecamente paradossale: da una parte si inscrive all’interno del modello patriarcale della donna disonorata, ma dall’altra denuncia la propria estraneità attraverso l’uso di una lingua sgrammaticata, prodotto di un’ibridazione di italiano e spagnolo che si avvia con una serie di divieti e di distacchi, ma improvvisamente inverte la rotta ed esplode in un’affettività immutata, ma ormai intollerabile. È questo forse il punto più tragico del romanzo” (2013: 128).

²⁹⁰ See Gragnolati (2013: 141) and Pischedda (2000: 403-4) on the figure of Manuele’s father.

novel displays the new creative possibilities that are prompted by the medium of cinema itself. However, the assault of visual memories, while a notable trait of the novel, is embedded into a narrative that, all in all, proves to be conceived non-cinematically and in a style already moulded on that nineteenth-century tradition of the realist novel that remains so central in Morante's writing.²⁹¹

²⁹¹ Rosa describes this style as “novecentescamente ultradecadente” (1995: 293).

CONCLUSION TO PART II

In chapters 4 and 5 I have given account of how the cinematic mode interacts with different styles in fiction, contributing to add a cinematic quality to the text. I have gone through certain examples of novels and short stories conducted either in the narrative tenses (*Processi verbali*, *Cinematografo cerebrale*, *The Maltese Falcon*; *Piazza d'Italia*) or commentative tenses (*Film parlé*, *La Jalousie*, *Teorema*), as well as narratives where a blend of commentative and narrative verbal tenses produces different results in relation to the cinematic mode (*Quaderni di Serafino Gubbio operatore*, *Uomini e no*, *Aracoeli*). Interestingly, present-tense narratives such as Némirovsky's and Robbe-Grillet's are essentially comparable in terms of narrative relief with past-tense narratives such as Hammett's, despite them being completely different in terms of style and focalisation. In these cases, the narrative relief is flattened and the storyworld is held in the narrative foreground. Conversely, *Piazza d'Italia* stands out for its background configuration of tenses that counterbalances the straightforward imitation of the montage technique.

Indeed, as I have explained in the theoretical part of this study, more than an imprecise visual quality that may have nothing to do with the filmic, the narrative relief or putting-into-relief is a decisive variable determining the cinematic mode: in strongly cinematised fiction, the narrative relief tends to be reduced as it is in film narratives and, consequently, most diegetic events seem to be pushed toward the narrative foreground. Therefore, the visual quality of the text stands out as cinematic when it comes to be conveyed through such a continuous narrative foreground. The narrators in these cases become para-cinematic to varying degrees, determining the relevance of the cinematic mode within the subgeneric traits of the works. Following this criterion, we can observe how an important characteristic of the film form is remediated in fiction and constitutes the basis against which to assess the

cinematic techniques used in the texts and the overall cinematisation of fiction. The narrative contract between the authors and the readers, accordingly, becomes a para-cinematic contract particularly in the cases of a sustained, implicit, formal imitation of the film form.

The cinematic mode, therefore, is linked with the intermedial categories discussed in Chapter 1 and can be described from the weakest to the strongest intermedial reference it enacts in terms of thematisation (*Aracoeli*, *Quaderni di Serafino Gubbio operatore*); evocation (*Cinematografo cerebrale*, *Piazza d'Italia*); and implicit formal imitation enacted to varying degrees (*Teorema*, *Uomini e no*, *The Maltese Falcon*, *Film parlé*, *La Jalousie*). In some of these cases, different intermedial references can also coexist: for example, a general evocation and traces of implicit formal imitation appear in *Aracoeli*; the extensive imitation of one specific technique (the montage) appears in *Piazza d'Italia*; conversely, the imitation of film form is counterbalanced by the narrator's comments in *Teorema*. In the cases of the clearest evidence of formal imitation (*The Maltese Falcon*, *Film parlé*, *La Jalousie*) the cinematic mode is so strong that the narratives completely imply a para-cinematic act of reading. The unique configuration of *La Jalousie*, with its first-or-third-person ambiguity and the superimposition of temporal levels, is highly indicative of the interference of the cinematic mode in fiction, and ultimately, of the impact of film on fiction.

Finally, the case of Morante's novel is particularly telling: thematisation and evocation of cinema do not automatically carry out a remediation of cinematic structures within the written narrative. In similar cases, the narrative is based on non-cinematic premises and a novelistic narrative contract. In a significant comparison with Tabucchi's example, Morante's neurotic character *explicitly* shapes his narration by means of his cinematic memory-machine, whereas Tabucchi's extradiegetic narrator *implicitly* arranges his telling to make it similar to filmic montage. From this point of view, the two very different novels remediate formal cinematic suggestions in a contrasting manner. Moreover, the two-fold narrative line in *Aracoeli* does not produce a flattening of the narrative relief. In a further comparison with

Uomini e no, the past-tense narration in *Aracoeli* is fundamentally based on background tenses, whereas in Vittorini's more cinematic novel the narrative discourse is based on the alternation of present tense and action verbs mostly in the *passato remoto*.

In conclusion, within this group of fictional works – characterised by the use of cinematic techniques, a more or less flattened narrative relief, as well as a more or less evident para-cinematic narrative contract – a great variety of discursive strategies, styles and aesthetic ambitions are pursued by writers who are significantly different from one another. What is key is that such varied artistic material can also be understood in terms of the cinematic mode that adds to the subgeneric traits of each example in different ways.

— PART III —

AN INTERMEDIAL PERSPECTIVE
ON ITALO CALVINO

6. CINEMATIC STRUCTURES IN ITALO CALVINO'S FICTIONS

Italo Calvino never made his love for cinema a secret. He started reviewing films in 1941 for 'Il Giornale di Genova',²⁹² and nurtured his passion for the seventh art throughout the years, also publishing several critical interventions and reviewing films at the Venice film festival for 'l'Unità' in the 1940s and 'Cinema Nuovo' in the 1950s. He even obtained the chairmanship of the festival in 1981. However, like many other twentieth-century writers and intellectuals, he was rather distrustful about the possibility of comparing cinema and literature, or the works of filmmakers and writers, in every respect. In 1953 he probably wrote more provocatively than he actually believed: "A me il cinema quando somiglia alla letteratura dà fastidio; e la letteratura quando somiglia al cinema anche" (S2: 1888). Regarding the creation of stories, in 1961 he stated:

Raccontare in letteratura e raccontare in cinema sono operazioni che non hanno nulla in comune. Nel primo caso si tratta di evocare delle immagini precise con delle parole necessariamente generiche, nel secondo caso si tratta di evocare dei sentimenti e pensieri generali attraverso immagini necessariamente precise. (S2: 1920)

²⁹² Calvino reviewed Amleto Palermi's *San Giovanni decollato* (1940), which was Totò's third film; and Mario Bonnard's *La fanciulla di Portici* (1940). These reviews appeared in the newspaper insert *Il Giornale di Imperia*. We owe the attribution of these early pieces of writing to Pietro Ferrua's study (1988).

Moreover, in 1966, answering a French enquiry on cinema and literature, Calvino held that close-ups and zoom effects are entirely cinematic techniques, and for this reason fundamentally incomparable to written language.²⁹³

Within the abundant studies on Calvino and image, only a few critics have explored his relationship with the cinema.²⁹⁴ Franco Ricci (1989: 189) pointed out that Calvino “incorporates distilled representations of the world drawn from books, cinema and painting”. Lucia Re (1999) convincingly stressed the determining role of cultural and geographical ‘distance’ in Calvino’s poetics, extending her argument to the distance between the spectator and the cinema screen, which cannot be eliminated even in the most extreme close-ups.²⁹⁵ She pointed out the complex relationship between Calvino’s fascination for the moving image and his repulsion for orality in general, as well as his consequent scarce interest for dialogue in films, claiming that “L’immaginazione di Calvino e il suo modo di essere e scrivere da spettatore sembrano quindi essere radicati nell’economia voyeuristica del cinema narrativo di tipo hollywoodiano e nel principio del piacere visivo dello schermo (basato sulla logica della

²⁹³ “Disons donc que ce que le cinéma a d’absolument cinématographique est incomparable aux procédés littéraires; de ce point de vue, entre cinéma et roman, il n’y a pas rien à enseigner et rien à apprendre” (*SI*: 1933). When asked about a possible influence of the cinema on his writing, he claimed: “J’aimé le cinéma toujours ‘en spectateur’, sans rapport avec mon travail littéraire”; and he added that a stronger influence came to him, if at all, from comics (*SI*: 1935-6). However, in a previous enquiry about the contemporary novel, he had championed Ernest Hemingway’s behaviorist style and the refusal of psychology (*SI*: 1525-6), a style which could be viewed as a renunciation of some inherent literary means in favour of a more objective, external, visual representation.

²⁹⁴ Lorenzo Pellizzari edited the important volume *L’avventura di uno spettatore. Calvino e il cinema* in 1990. The new edition of the book includes two new essays by Tommaso Pomilio and Roberto Silvestri (Pellizzari 2015).

²⁹⁵ Re builds her argument on Calvino’s claim about the cultural and geographical distance he needed to love a film. See the interview of the author that appeared in ‘La Stampa’ on 23 August 1981: “Quando sono entrato a fare parte del mondo della carta stampata, il cinema fatto da persone che potevo conoscere non mi faceva più tanta impressione. Non c’era più il sentimento della distanza, di pensiero mitico, di dilatazione dei confini del reale: per ritrovarlo dovevo vedere i film giapponesi, appartenenti a un mondo totalmente lontano” (cf. Tornabuoni, 2015: 179). For this reason, Calvino also disliked the “barbaric” practice of dubbing foreign films, which has been common in Italy. See also Michele Canosa (2015) on Calvino and distance at the cinema.

scopofilia)”.²⁹⁶ This argument has recently been recalled by Vito Santoro (2012: 20) in his survey of the author’s predilections and work as a reviewer. Regarding textual analysis, however, the previously mentioned studies by Antonio Costa and Paolo Brandi focus mainly on Calvino’s last work, *Palomar* (1983). Notwithstanding Calvino’s claim that the “‘cinema mentale’ è sempre in funzione in tutti noi – e lo è sempre stato, anche prima dell’invenzione del cinema” (*SI*: 699), a broader survey of the influence of cinema on Calvino’s writing has been somewhat neglected within Calvinian studies, while other interesting contributions have shed light on the importance, for example, of theatre in his writing and ideology (Ferrara 2011, 2014).

In this final section I argue that cinema had an important influence on Calvino (1923-1985)²⁹⁷ and contributed to the particular visual value that critics (e.g. Belpoliti, 2006; Grundtvig et al., 2007; Ricci, 2001) have attributed to his prose. On the other hand, in his discourse on ‘visibility’ included in *Lezioni americane* (1991), the writer himself emphasised the importance of “*pensare per immagini*” (*SI*: 707).²⁹⁸ Calvino’s ability to provide the reader with sharp and vivid images has been linked, by synecdoche, with his being a brain-and-eye writer (Asor Rosa 1988: 264), with painting (Ricci 1989, 2007), and also with optical devices

²⁹⁶ On cinema and scopophilia see the fundamental article by Laura Mulvey (1975).

²⁹⁷ I refer to the ‘Meridiani’ editions (Calvino 1995a; Calvino 1995b; Calvino 1993b; Calvino 1992) and use the following abbreviations (*SI*: *Saggi*, vol. 1; *S2*: *Saggi*, vol. 2; *RR1*: *Romanzi e racconti*, vol. 1; *RR2*: *Romanzi e racconti*, vol. 2).

²⁹⁸ In a 1960 letter to French philosopher François Wahl, Calvino claimed: “Insomma, quello cui io tendo, l’unica cosa che vorrei poter insegnare è un modo di *guardare*, cioè di essere in mezzo al mondo. In fondo la letteratura non può insegnare altro” (Calvino, 1991: 350). This point partly links Calvino’s approach with those of Flaubert and Conrad, which I mentioned in the introduction to this study. On Calvino and Conrad see Martin McLaughlin and Arianna Scicutella (2002); and Calvo Montoro (2007: 142), who claims that Conrad “became a model of visibility” for Calvino.

(Pierantoni 1988).²⁹⁹ Visibility in Calvino is primarily associated with the idea of ‘lightness’ and ‘exactitude’, since images work as a means to create surprising effects and enhance the precision of his prose. However, in Calvino visibility is also vital because it acts on ‘quickness’ and ‘multiplicity’: it facilitates expressive economy and engenders a system of diegetic cross-references.³⁰⁰ The general tendency for geometric sketching informs the structures of most of his works, from the *Antenati* trilogy (*Il visconte dimezzato*, 1952; *Il barone rampante*, 1957; *Il cavaliere inesistente*, 1959), where the iconic main characters trigger a plot of symmetric and opposite figures, to his ‘combinatorial’ period, passing through the fundamental influence that Greimas’s semiotics and the OuLiPo group had on his work. Within the overall agreement regarding the vividness of his writing, Bonsaver pointed out Calvino’s penchant for “mental” visibility and abstract geometrisation over the visual sequence of narrative events (Bonsaver, 1995b: 188). Therefore, a fundamental idea of visibility in Calvino as something abstract, drawn and pictorial emerges.³⁰¹ However, whereas this dominant characteristic is certainly observable throughout his work, and particularly in the *Antenati* trilogy, *Le Cosmicomiche* (1965), *Ti con zero* (1967), *Le città invisibili* (1972), or *Il castello dei destini incrociati* (1973), on the other

²⁹⁹ Pierantoni goes across the periodisation of Calvino’s works following optical metaphors such as the *burning glass* (first, neorealistic, engaged period), where the light is concentrated onto a small area and the observer destroys the observed, the ray erases wax words as in Aristophanes’s *Clouds*; the *camera obscura* (the *Antenati* period), where Calvino’s depiction become sharpened: “La lingua e la scrittura aumentano di ‘risoluzione’, ossia separano linguisticamente dettagli non separabili dalla prosa del periodo precedente» (1988: 281); the *kaleidoscope* (combinatorial period), where the real is multiple, fragmented, symmetric, manipulable, reversible; the *plane mirror* (later years, *Palomar*), where the struggle to see and know is central but frustrated.

³⁰⁰ “Dunque nell’ideazione d’un racconto la prima cosa che mi viene in mente è un’immagine che per qualche ragione mi si presenta come carica di significato [...]. Appena l’immagine è diventata abbastanza netta nella mia mente, mi metto a svilupparla in una storia, o meglio, sono le immagini stesse che sviluppano le loro potenzialità implicite, il racconto che esse portano dentro di sé. Attorno a ogni immagine ne nascono delle altre, si forma un campo di analogie, di simmetrie, di contrapposizioni” (S1: 704).

³⁰¹ Among the many contributions on Calvino in Italian and English I recall here the studies by Claudio Milanini (1990), Lucia Re (1990), Kathryn Hume (1992), Martin McLaughlin (1998), Eugenio Bolongaro (2003) and Mario Barenghi (2007), along with the extensive critical work accomplished by Milanini, Falchetto and Barenghi for the Meridiani edition. For a thorough account of Calvino criticism until 1995 see McLaughlin (1996).

hand Calvino's more realistically-oriented work does not seem to fit completely in this critical argument, as there the visual quality emerges more iconically and cinematically.

Therefore, I will discuss some formal traits deriving from the film form and cinematic culture that appear to have passed into Calvino's works throughout his career. A wider reading through his work is appropriate, since the connection with the cinema may provide further perspectives about the value of cinematic visibility in Calvino's writing. In the following sections I will focus on some of the characteristics and techniques (e.g. cinematic temporality, point of view, establishing shots, close-ups, zooms, match cuts, parallel editing, slapstick characterisation) emerging from Calvino's texts that suggest a tendency to represent stories cinematically. Specific techniques are found even in the stories (the vast majority) that are largely non-cinematic because of their marked narrative relief; however, other instances demonstrate that a variety of cinematic structures are integrated more systematically, and constitute stronger examples of the cinematic mode in Calvino's fiction.

6.1. Scenic effects and para-cinematic iteration

Calvino's first novel *Il sentiero dei nidi di ragno* (1947) is characterised by the continuous use of deictics combined with the present tense. The consistent visual quality of the novel lies in the flattened narrative relief given by the present and aims at making the here and now of the storyworld more immersive for the reader. Consider the following excerpt from the second chapter, where the technique is enhanced by the recurrent use of the adverb 'ora' within or at the beginning of many paragraphs:

Ora il tedesco gira per la camera in maglietta, con le braccia rosee e cicciose come cosce, e ogni tanto viene a fuoco della fessura; a un certo punto si vedono anche le ginocchia

della sorella che girano per aria ed entrano sotto le lenzuola. Pin ora deve contorcere per seguire dove viene posato il cinturone con la pistola [...]

Ora è il momento: Pin dovrebbe entrare nella camera e carponi tirare giù, senza far rumore, il cinturone dalla sedia [...] (RRI: 16)

This is the narrator's style in broad textual areas. Interestingly, here the description also recalls the visual perspective of the old so-called keyhole films, which were very popular in the early years of cinema and whose effects would be continuously improved later with a significant alternation of POV shots and objective shots. This excerpt could in no way recall a theatrical play, because the alternation of internal ocularisations (the images from the interior) and zero ocularisations (the images about Pin) would not be visualisable by the theatrical spectator.

This effect of presentification and flattening of the narrative relief, which is clear-cut and constant in *Sentiero*, is also ambiguously employed in some short stories of those years that were collected in *Ultimo viene il corvo* (1949) and, later, in *Racconti* (1958). In *Un pomeriggio, Adamo*, the childish sensuality of two teenagers mixes with that of plants in a highly-visual narrative characterised by the intensive use of action verbs, here in the *imperfetto*: “Il giardiniere era un ragazzo coi capelli lunghi, e una crocetta di stoffa in testa per tenerli fermi. Adesso veniva su per il viale con l’innaffiatoio pieno” (RRI: 151). In *L'avventura di un soldato* (1949) a similar tension to presentification and ‘live’ account is conveyed by deictics combined with the *imperfetto*: “Ecco che la vedova rassettava la giacchetta che portava in grembo, ecco che la faceva spiovvere da un lato. Per offrirgli un riparo o per sbarrargli il varco? Ecco: ora la mano si muoveva libera e non vista, s’aggrappava a lei” (RRI: 324).³⁰² These examples single out the two main tenses (*presente* and *imperfetto*) that play a key role in Calvino’s fictions in general, to

³⁰² It is interesting to observe in passing that Calvino considered *L'avventura di un soldato* as one of his least filmable stories. However, it would become a beautiful episode in the film *L'amore difficile* (1962), directed and interpreted by Nino Manfredi.

the detriment of the *passato remoto*, which is repeatedly used but rarely gains the structuring power to shape the stories cinematically that are narrated in the past. Overall, while many stories are clearly evocative and characterised by background tenses (e.g. *Alba sui rami nudi*, *Di padre in figlio*, or most stories about wartime), others are more scenic (*Pranzo con un pastore*, *Andato al comando*, *Furto in una pasticceria*, *Dollari e vecchie mondane*, *Si dorme come cani*, *Chi ha messo una mina nel mare?*);³⁰³ however, the narrative discourse in these stories barely achieves a cinematic dimension, because Calvino's narrators do not employ cinematic techniques and, additionally, they very often comment on the narratives.

Yet, there are other specific cases. In *Un letto di passaggio*³⁰⁴ (1949) the action verbs at the beginning are in the *passato remoto* and introduce the central section, which is divided in two logical parts before the final denouement. Scoundrel Gim is chased by the police and spends the night at a prostitute friend's place, where her husband Lilin also lives. However, a policeman in search of Gim knocks on the same door hoping for a tip-off, and eventually decides to spend the rest of the night there, as he is a client as well. The seeming hardboiled style of the beginning turns into the grotesque when the ironic suspense reaches its climax. In the first part the transition from the past to the present tense immediately enhances the cinematic quality of the text. The following scene unfolds between Hammett's and Hemingway's style:

Gim si spoglia fumando, appende i suoi calzoni ben piegati, sistema la giacca su una sedia vicino al capezzale, porta le sigarette dal cassettone al comodino, i fiammiferi, un portacenere, entra in letto. Amanda spegne la luce all'*abat-jour* e sospira. Gim fuma. Lilin dorme nel corridoio. Armanda si gira. Gim spegne nel portacenere. Bussano alla porta. (RR2: 1037)

³⁰³ *Chi ha messo una mina nel mare?* is described by Calvino as a “soggetto per film comico alla Alexandrov” (RR1: 1272).

³⁰⁴ This text was published in *Racconti* and included later in *Gli amori difficili* (1970) with the title *L'avventura di un bandito*.

The second part begins when the policeman enters with the transition to the *passato remoto* (“Entrò Soddu”, 1038), and maintains its cinematic quality until the end by virtue of the foregrounding effect of this narrative tense. Moreover, the present-tense part of the daily life of Lilin is also briefly expressed by a cinematic ‘episodic sequence’.³⁰⁵ This is not an isolated example in Calvino. The technique of episodic sequence also completely informs the narrative logic of *I figli poltroni* (scenes about the sons’ apathy in any given day), while *I fratelli Bagnasco* exemplifies the ‘ordinary’ cinematic sequence described by Metz (scenes about their rudeness in situations on one specific day).³⁰⁶ Therefore, the two present-tense stories also exemplify iterative narration and singulative narration with reference to filmic techniques.

There are further examples of para-cinematic iteration in Calvino. The beginning of *Sentiero* shows some characters’ movements and speeches that are evidently recurrent. The reader is given a representation of what happens almost every time young Pin is around. Yet, the beginning does not show linguistic marks of iteration. Calvino’s page may be taken as a good example of his affinity with the way filmmakers express an idea of routine by having to show *one* episode that suggests a virtual continuity (it suffices to recall scenes in contemporary movies where a youngster is being bullied):

Basta un grido di Pin, un grido per incominciare una canzone, a naso all’aria sulla soglia della bottega, o un grido cacciato prima che la mano di Pietromagro il ciabattino gli sia

³⁰⁵ Like the ‘ordinary sequence’, the ‘episodic sequence’ is a *chronological, narrative* and *discontinuous* sequence. The ordinary sequence is a syntagmatic type that is very common in cinema (the sequence skips the moments that have no bearing on the plot); the episodic sequence “strings together a number of very brief scenes, which are usually separated from each other by optical devices (dissolves, etc.). [...] Each one of the images constituting the series appears distinctly as the symbolic summary of one stage in the fairly long evolution condensed by the total sequence” (Metz, 1974: 130-1).

³⁰⁶ Compare, by contrast, with Calvino’s technique in another all-iterative narrative, *L’avventura di due sposi* (1958) where the typical day of the couple is more traditionally narrated and iteration is conveyed by the imperfect tense and durative forms.

scesa tra capo e collo per picchiarlo, perché dai davanzali nasca un'eco di richiami e d'insulti.

“Pin! Già a quest’ora cominci ad angosciarci! Cantacene un po’ una, Pin! Pin, meschinetto, cosa ti fanno? Pin, muso di macacco! Ti si seccasse la voce in gola, una volta! Tu e quel rubagalline del tuo padrone! Tu e quel materasso di tua sorella!”

Ma già Pin è in mezzo al carrugio, con le mani nelle tasche della giacca troppo da uomo per lui [...] (RR1: 5)

The iteration is alluded to with the expression “basta un grido [...] o un grido” followed by a verb in the subjunctive mood, the mood of non-objectivity; then Pin is ‘already’ in the middle of the *carrugio* (the characteristic alley of old Ligurian towns) and in the middle of our visualisation. We plunge into the story, just as we do when watching scenes structured in a similar way in cartoons (such as the opening sequence in, say, Disney’s *Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs*, 1937; or in *Beauty and the Beast*, 1991), where repetitive situations are expressed once on the screen.³⁰⁷ At the beginning of Calvino’s *Sentiero*, the storyworld is introduced in the present tense; the present interacts with deictics and dialogue minimising the narrative relief and prompting highly-filmic mental association in the reader’s mind. Few clear references to the repetitiveness of Pin’s actions are found only later (“mattina e sera sotto le finestre a sgolarsi in canzoni e in gridi”, 6) and in the meeting with Pietromagro, who beats him. However, the text then says that “per quel giorno nessuno lo rivede”, and the focus is brought back to the here and now of the scene through singulative narration. Thus, we soon understand that the entire first chapter unfolds through the alternation of iterative and singulative passages. “Ogni due giorni” (6) the German soldier visits Pin’s sister; at the tavern “ci sono sempre gli stessi, tutto il giorno, da anni” (7) and Pin sings jailhouse songs. But then, again, “quel giorno” (9) Pin meets the German:

³⁰⁷ In 1946 Calvino wrote that Disney is “il più moderno e il più grande dei favolisti, in cui non saprei dire dove finisce lo studio della psicologia animale, e dove comincia quella della psicologia umana” (S2: 2135-6). On Calvino and Walt Disney’s animals see Andrea Dini (2002). Calvino might have also been influenced by the musicals with Fred Astaire and Ginger Rogers which he greatly enjoyed.

E tutti gli altri, battendo il tempo con le mani alla vecchia Bersagliera che ballonzola,
fanno il coro:

“Amor se mi vuoi bene – più giù devi toccar.”

Quel giorno il marinaio tedesco veniva su di cattivo umore. [...]

– Niente sigarette avere – dice a Pin che gli è venuto incontro a dargli il *gutentag*. Pin
comincia a smicciarlo di traverso. (*RR1*: 9)

The textual transition from the iterative passage in the present tense and the singulative passage comes without interruption, only a short background description in the *imperfetto* is embedded, to which a foregrounded scene immediately follows. And so on: Pin leaves the German, “si trova solo a girare nei vicoli, con tutti che gli gridano impropri e lo cacciano via” (10), and an iterative section follows; yet some time must have passed, because we are told that Pin “ora entrerà nell’osteria fumosa e viola, e dirà cose oscene” (11); however, the tavern’s customers have changed now, and these (the partisans) start excluding him from their conversations; after this second singulative scene at the tavern, the same transition as above occurs and “Pin ora è nel carrugio. È sera e alle finestre s’accendono i lumi” (13), until the chapter concludes with some quips between Pin and a fellow: singulative actions, as the reader has completely entered the storyworld now.

In these pages the sense of an iteration is left to the spectator’s inference. When it comes to creative literary remediations of such cinematic solutions or constraints, the reader is called to fill in what the text implies with a higher or subtler inference. This para-cinematic narrative contract addresses contemporary readers by virtue of the learned convention of the cinematic mode, and is rather different from that of conventional realistic novels, where the narrators clearly express iterations by a number of linguistic, normally unequivocal, marks. Calvino could have summarised the first chapter in a few paragraphs. Instead, he accurately depicts such repetitive situations so as to render such iterativity easily visualisable. This way of

expressing iteration is observable in many movies, with different levels of ambiguity, when repetitive situations are inevitably presented as singulative images by the filmic narrator.³⁰⁸

The iteration in *Sentiero* is akin to the cinematic sequence by episodes, which is a chronological sequence. The ‘bracket syntagma’ in film is the nonchronological type of the same narrative device (Metz, 1974: 125-7), where images are juxtaposed to form a logical unity that does not hinge on their temporality. This instance is found in Calvino’s short story *L'avventura di un lettore* (1958). The story begins with a fairly literary-codified movement, from wide spaces (“la strada litoranea, sul capo, passava alta; il mare era laggiù a strapiombo e dappertutto intorno, fino all'orizzonte alto e sfumato”) to a detail (the book wrapped in the towel, *RR2*: 1126), but it gains a cinematic quality by virtue of its simple syntax and descriptive economy, alternating the establishing shot to the internal ocularisation by the main character, Amedeo Oliva. The logic of the first part of the story is immediately peculiar: when Amedeo starts reading on the cliffs, the narration becomes iterative because different characters of novels abruptly overlap in his mind. Visually and conceptually, the episode ‘Amedeo at sea’ begins by recounting many other episodes, as it refers to the books he read in the past at the same place:

³⁰⁸ To restate this point, one can appreciate how the film form tends to put logically-repetitive events into the narrative foreground by *showing* them, i.e. by conveying them through one ambiguous singulative representation. In a film of the same period, for example, such as Luchino Visconti’s *La terra trema* (1948), released after Calvino’s novel, the timeless repetitiveness of the fishermen’s early waking and preparation is expressed by the establishing shot, in which the voice-over provides the external “Come sempre...” specifying what is going on – a very literary prompt, here. Forced repetition is one of the attitudes ridiculed in Chaplin’s *Modern Times* (1936), starting with the image of the rotating needle of a clock. After the image of a flock of sheep, the story is introduced by means of objective shots of men going to work, i.e. singular moving-images of recurrent actions and situations, as seen at the beginning of Fritz Lang’s *Metropolis* (1927). Another example is Pasolini’s long-take in *Mamma Roma* (1962), featuring Anna Magnani walking through the boulevard and approached in turn by some figures with whom she exchanges joking anecdotes and quips. While irrelevant plotwise, the sequence nonetheless shows one ordinary, recurring situation of her daily life, and may be considered the filmic equivalent of a hypothetical textual passage introduced by ‘Come tutte le sere’. In Giuseppe Tornatore’s *Nuovo cinema paradiso* (1990), the censorship of cinematic kisses carried out by the parish priest of the Sicilian village is clearly recurrent and sticks in little Salvatore’s mind, harboured for years, and finally triggers one of the most moving grand finales of all time.

[Gli occhi di Amedeo] inseguivano per le righe bianche e nere il cavallo di Fabrizio del Dongo. Sotto di lui s'apriva una piccola cala d'acqua verdazzurra, trasparente fin quasi al fondo. [...] Amedeo ogni tanto levava gli occhi a quella vista circostante [...] poi tornava assorto sulla pagina dove Raskolnikov contava i gradini che lo separavano dalla porta della vecchia o Lucien de Rubempré prima di infilare il capo nel nodo scorsoio contemplava le torri e i tetti della Conciergerie. (1127)

This is a para-cinematic narrative passage, similar to the expedient used by filmmakers to summarise repetitive actions by a rapid montage of situations (e.g. when a sequence represents an athlete's workout over a period of time, and we see him wearing different clothes in different times and places, as in the training montages in *Rocky*'s films).³⁰⁹ Calvino's technique, moreover, is essentially comparable to Vladimir Nabokov's in *Lolita* (1955), where the narrator gives a summary of Humbert's past – a page already described by Chatman, who links it to the filmic montage-sequence. Whereas Nabokov varies the brief summary of the man's past by modifying his title and name ("doctor Humbert", "professor H.", "Mr Edgar H. Humbert" and so on), thereby triggering several imaginary renditions of him in the reader's mind, Calvino changes the book titles keeping the focus on the unfolding of the scene. The result in Calvino is not as much a summary of the character's past as a way to express a recurring activity by the protagonist, who returns year by year to the same place to read in peace. In fact, the passage introduces a longer section explicitly composed by marks of iterativity in the *imperfetto*. This way one can see, with Chatman (1978: 70), how "a technique developing in one narrative medium *faute de mieux*" can be "taken up as an exciting new possibility by another which is not itself under the same formative restrictions". In Calvino, as well as in Nabokov, the effect is pleasant and remarkable because it strengthens the expressive economy of the text after producing an initial disorientation in the reader.

³⁰⁹ A filmmaker might translate Calvino's textual passage using superimpositions or dissolves, alternating the image of Amedeo and the images of the characters triggered in his mind.

Moreover, Calvino's short story is marked by insistent internal ocularisations on the part of the protagonist. Amedeo's book, in fact, remains until the end as a sort of magnetic pole for his mind. His reading is disturbed by the appearance of a woman in a bikini in the larger central section, when the narration becomes singulative. The narrative is told as substantially seen from Amedeo's point of view in many passages: "Ora lo sguardo che scorreva le righe incontrava, ogni volta che doveva andare a capo, appena al di là del margine della pagina, le gambe della villeggiante solitaria (*RR2*: 1131-2); "Vide gli zoccoli e le gambe dritte poco più in là del libro, risalì con lo sguardo, riabbassò gli occhi sulla pagina" (*RR2*: 1136). The 'inconvenience' represented by the woman is all visually determined; Amedeo Oliva is a forebear of Palomar.

6.2. Point of view shots

A number of Calvino's narratives show an insistence on sight, and among them *Palomar* (1983) is the most obvious. In his study on this work, Costa (1988: 254) pointed out that the character's body seems not to end with his head, but with a bizarre optical-mechanical device. The character's attempt to grasp the environment, objects and bodies around him recalls proto-cinematic optical tools, such as the chronophotographic gun.³¹⁰ Brandi's observations (2007: 169-78) on the filmic tracking and zoom techniques used in the description of Palomar's movements are largely correct, so I am not going to repeat them here. However, I am not convinced by some interpretations of Palomar's gaze as a POV shot, since the

³¹⁰ "Questa idea di 'fissazione', espressa in modo mirabile nel capitolo 'L'invasione degli stormi', sembra derivare direttamente dagli scritti di Marey" (Costa, 1988: 256).

narrative is in the third person, and the reader also ‘sees’ Palomar adjusting his position in detail. Consider the following passage:

Perciò egli, appena vede profilarsi da lontano la nuvola bronzeo-rosea d’un torso nudo femminile, s’affretta ad atteggiare il capo in modo che la traiettoria dello sguardo resti sospesa nel vuoto e garantisca del suo civile rispetto per la frontiera invisibile che circonda le persone. (RR2: 880)

The general impression of the filmic in *Palomar* seems, if anything, conveyed by an apt alternation of traditional objective and over-the-shoulder shots, in which POV shots are occasionally inserted. This all the more reaffirms the importance of film narrative in its textual configuration, because films have always suffered when they have insistently relied on POV shots, as is the case of Robert Montgomery’s *Lady in the Lake* (1947). An interpretation of what surrounds Palomar only in terms of internal ocularisation is untenable. Moreover, since in most of Palomar’s stories the character’s thoughts and even some theoretical considerations on the action of seeing are given, the book is considerably different from straight para-cinematic narratives. However, the cinematic mode emerges as a ‘colouring’, additional style in *Palomar*, occasionally enhanced and exploited for creative purposes. *Palomar* exemplifies the moderate use of the cinematic mode in Calvino.

However, internal ocularisations that recall the cinematic POV shot are regularly observable in Calvino’s narratives when the characters’ gaze is emphasised, thereby constituting an important para-cinematic technique at his disposal. Let us consider other cases of such a distinct technique. In *La speculazione edilizia* (1957) the narrative begins with the image of Quinto on a train looking through the window (a situation that is resumed at the beginning of the second chapter). We read an internally-ocularised, attentive, almost volumetric description of the buildings, in a textual passage marked by deictics and discursive signals indicating the here and now:

La febbre del cemento s'era impadronita della Riviera: là vedevi il palazzo già abitato, con le cassette dei gerani tutti uguali ai balconi, qua il caseggiato appena finito [...].

Ora più nulla, non vedeva che un sovrapporsi geometrico di parallelepipedi e poliedri, spigoli e lati di case, di qua e di là, tetti, finestre, muri ciechi per servitù contigue con solo i finestrini smerigliati dei gabinetti uno sopra l'altro. (*RR1*: 781-2)

The POV is that of the character on the train who re-discovers “pezzo per pezzo il paesaggio” (*RR1*: 781). The reader even catches the rapid flow of the buildings on the side of the railway (note: “muri ciechi per servitù”). However, a ‘bracket syntagma’ is embedded in the narration and signals that Quinto is remembering the past through some recurrent episodes (“ogni volta c’era qualcosa...”; “Quando Quinto saliva alla sua villa...”; “Sua madre, ogni volta che lui veniva...”). Thus, the representation alternates Quinto’s actual visualisation of the landscape with his memories of the same landscape. Where a nineteenth-century writer (Balzac in *Père Goriot*, or Manzoni in *I promessi sposi*, end of chapter eight) would have suspended the storytime to insert a digression or a lyric description, here the post-cinematic writer chooses ‘to place his camera’ on the train and render the *action of seeing* with a para-cinematic montage. Moreover, in *La speculazione edilizia* dialogues and characters’ speeches are often placed in significant positions at the end of the chapters, in part signalling the change of location and sequence. During certain dialogues, an analytic description of the faces is given after more summative or introductory indications, as if the main character, with his lenticular eye, could push so close to the object, scanning the tiniest wrinkle or the subtlest glittering of an eye.

Such attention to facial and bodily details in Calvino is often conveyed from the characters’ points of view, as in the short story *L’occhio del padrone* (1947), included in *Ultimo viene il corvo*, about the son of a landowner reluctantly looking after his workers in the cornfield. In some points, a precise internal ocularisation overlaps the internal focalisation on the young man, as in the following passage, when the owner’s son is walking through the typical terraced landscape of the Ligurian coast (“il verde che digrada a strisce”), moving closer toward the workers:

Il grano era in certe fasce su una ripa sassosa dove cresceva a stento, *un rettangolo giallo in mezzo al grigio* delle terre gerbide, e *due cipressi neri uno su e uno giù* che sembrava facessero la guardia. Nel grano c'erano gli uomini e un muoversi di falci; *il giallo a poco a poco spariva* come cancellato e *sotto rispuntava il grigio*. (*RR1*: 193; my italics)

Despite the background configuration of the verbal tenses, the reader is brought closer to the scene and invited to enter the storyworld visually through the character's point of view, while very few indications intervene to explain what is going on. A tendency to the filmic POV shot emerges then, particularly, in the three cases in which the man's gaze is attracted by Franceschina's 'white skin on the back of her knees', which clearly suggests an insistent and sexualised gaze on her while she is working, since she wears a skirt and has been leaning forwards.

A general tendency towards POV shots is also observable in *Impiccagione di un giudice* (1948), which is a dream,³¹¹ where the description of the court and the people waiting for the sentence is continually justified by the moving gaze of the judge. This narrative also includes an interesting back-and-forth movement from the court to the judge's thoughts, because these are always triggered by what he is 'seeing'. A patent remediation of a zoom or an axial cut, as seen later in *Palomar*, stands out as well. The description of the convict in the cage is initially a sort of long shot of the man; a shift in the description then brings the judge's gaze extremely close to him (note the reference to his pupils), while a pull back movement creates the recomposition of the subject's figure:

³¹¹ This short story shows scarce textual elements that point to its being a dream; however it was originally titled *Il sogno di un giudice* when it was published in 'Rinascita' in February 1948. As reported in the Meridiani edition, this text was included in the 1949 edition of *Ultimo viene il corvo* and, later, in the 1969 and 1976 editions of the same collection. Calvino's curators state that the 1949 text shows "lievissimi ritocchi linguistici e di punteggiatura. Nelle edizioni successive si mantiene invariato" (*RR1*: 1302).

L'imputato era già nella gabbia, impassibile, con un vestito lindo e ben stirato. Aveva i capelli d'un grigio opaco ravviati con cura che cominciavano bassi sopra gli occhi e sugli zigomi; e pupille chiarissime che sembravano spente nell'occhiello un po' arrossato delle palpebre senza ciglia né sopracciglia; le labbra erano tumide, ma dello stesso colore della pelle; a schiuderle mostrava gli incisivi grossi e quadrati. Sotto la pelle rasata la barba aveva lasciato un'ombra come di marmo. Le mani, aggrappate con gesto calmo alle sbarre, avevano dita grosse e piatte come timbri. (*RR1*: 347-8)

The description moves from the prisoner's hair down to his hands around the iron bars, which are very realistically described below his throat, in an image comparable to the famed Buster Keaton's frame in *The Goat* (1921). This and the following two close-ups of the man might also be interpreted as 'affection-images' (Deleuze, 1983: 125-72). The affection-image of the fascist convict produces identification, empathy, solidarity in the fascist judge, who will acquit him ("Guardò le labbra dell'imputato, sporgenti e pallide: [...] oh, come il giudice Onofrio Clerici comprendeva lo schifo dell'imputato", *RR1*: 349). These close-up passages visually isolate the man from the court in the judge's thought; they abstract him and posit his face as a Deleuzian 'icon of quality' (in him: honour, impassivity, bravery), and as the meeting point of the numerous acts of eye contact among the characters throughout the narrative.³¹² The judge is chairing the trial and sitting in his pivotal and distant position. The narrative relies on powerful images in the crucial points: the spitting on the dead recalled by a witness is duplicated by the spittle in the convict's teeth in the present scene. Moreover, the clerk of the court ("un vecchino con la testa a pigna", 346) who appears at the beginning and at the end represents the 'dividual' in Deleuze's terms, for he symbolises from close range the appearance of all Italians sitting at the bottom of the courtroom ("gentetta logora", 344; "gentucola

³¹² As David Deamer summarises well in his extremely helpful study on Deleuze's books on cinema, "the affection-image is expressed by an embodied character, the face becoming the site of filmable external expressions capturing unfilmable internal intensive states. This is the icon, the expression of emotions and feelings" (Deamer, 2016: 82-3).

schifosa”, 345).³¹³ Thus, the fascist ‘icon’ and the ‘dividual’ body that symbolises Italian-ness haunt the judge’s dream. Overall, from a Deleuzian perspective, Calvino’s narrative is perfectly cinematic and unfolds as a ‘dream-image’ (Deleuze, 1985: 62-91) in which affection-images play a key role.³¹⁴

Several stories, therefore, evidently anticipate *Palomar*’s stylistic outcomes. In *L'avventura di un miope* (1958) a character learns to see again through the use of glasses. Here the optical device of the lens seems to engender a magic transformation of reality that is similar to that experienced by the audience of early films. One may establish equivalence between the protagonist and the cinemagoer; the glasses and the camera lens; the reality and the projected images on the screen. “Dovette a poco a poco farci l'abitudine; imparare da capo quello che era inutile guardare e quel che era necessario”: this is a general problem that filmmakers and viewers had to learn from and manage throughout the history of the seventh art. Continuing with the same equivalence, the regained possibility of being fascinated by women, now re-eroticised, is analogous to the fascinating power of the Hollywood star system: “Non più soltanto gli pareva un vedere ma già addirittura un possederle”; moreover: “Attraverso la necessità degli occhiali, andava lentamente imparando a vivere” (*RR2*: 1943-4). Such connections might not have been in Calvino’s intentions; however, the topic of optical

³¹³ “The dividual captures the affect as a mutual moment between the de-individualisation of the individual and the individualisation of a mass (the singularity of a group, crowd, multitude). [...] The camera traverses a series of faces, captures bodies in a gathering, people embodying a happening, caught up in or fleeing an event. In so doing the dividual is created: complex affects as an image of an assemblage. Reciprocally, a body may be made to capture the dividual, reflect and act as a collective enunciation, for every body captures and enacts a population” (Deamer, 2016: 84).

³¹⁴ To be precise, it can be seen as a ‘movement of the world’, the ‘genetic sign’ of the dream-image (cf. Deamer, 2016: 122-6).

filtering, which is key in his literary production, was already found in the writer's interests during the Fifties.³¹⁵

6.3. Establishing shots

The establishing-shot technique is imitated in some of Calvino's fictions. In the short story *Attesa della morte in un albergo* (1949) – which is, overall, non-cinematic – an explicit reference is found: “faccia a faccia coi tedeschi bardati a guerra che fermavano i passanti in mezzo alla via, a tre metri da loro, come nell'apritisca d'un film” (*RR1*: 230). This reference to the establishing shot is indicative of Calvino's returning attention and imagination. In *Sentiero*, the initial image of the midday sunlight in the *carrugio* where Pin is introduced constitutes a perfect para-cinematic establishing shot. It concisely sets the spatiotemporal coordinates of the story by means of visual references and differs from traditional literary description in that it does not include other explanations or digressions. The descriptive movement replicates a camera up-to-down tilting, with a chain of environmental detail from the sky to the cobblestones and “una cunetta in mezzo per l'orina dei muli” (*RR1*: 5).³¹⁶

The themes of the filtering light creating geometric effects or, conversely, that of the expanding shadow, are sometimes remarkably combined with establishing shots (as in *Sentiero*)

³¹⁵ *L'avventura di un miope* can be paired with *L'avventura di un fotografo*, which would deserve a more articulate analysis than what I can produce here. This story in fact reveals several similarities with *Palomar*, a similar desire to explore the infinitely small in space and time, the molecular fragmentation of life in which Mr Palomar will fall and die. *L'avventura di un fotografo* became a medium-length film with the same title directed by Francesco Maselli in 1982 (cf. Bogani, 2015).

³¹⁶ Both in cinema and comics the establishing shot is a fundamentally descriptive device that is placed at the beginning or in a change of scene, providing the spectator with fundamental information about where and when the action is set. However, it can also be used in movies to reflect the emotional feelings of a character, or underline a specific quality or perception of a place. Significantly, when the establishing shot is avoided, as in specific points in most horror films, it creates significant suspense.

or used to enact transitions or emblematic endings.³¹⁷ In *Palomar*, the previously-mentioned description of the sun reflecting on the water surface (see Chapter 2) is a rather evocative establishing shot. Significantly, the few lines at the beginning reproduce the object of Palomar's gaze despite being initially presented as ambiguous zero ocularisations. On the contrary, the closing sentence in *La speculazione edilizia* (1963) reads as follows:

Il sole spariva presto dietro l'edificio di Caisotti e di tra le stecche delle persiane la luce che batteva sull'argenteria del buffet era sempre meno, era adesso solo quella che passava tra le stecche più alte e si spegneva a poco a poco, sulle curve lustre dei vassoi, delle teiere... (RR1: 890)

The ending image expresses that times are changing, the building that threatens the old family house is finally Caisotti's property, and the meaning is conveyed by images that are more powerful than a thousand words. This ending conceptually recalls the beginning (the modification of the city's panorama seen from the train), as the narrative progression follows a spiral structure that sheds light on the real historical process described.

In *La notte dei numeri* (1958) “Il buio della sera s’infila nelle vie e nei corsi” and “larghi rettangoli di luce senza schermi svelano i misteri degli uffici delle mille ditte della città” (RR2: 1051). The visual effect is comparable to Hitchcock’s *Rear Window* (1954). The sort of long take that constitutes the establishing shot describes a “scenario geometrico” of office windows beyond which people are rearranging their desks and leaving, while office cleaners start their shift. The transition from this establishing shot from outside the building to the action unfolding inside the offices is signalled by the rolling shutters obscuring the light of the windows in a crash. The reader is immediately brought inside the building where the

³¹⁷ The importance of lights and shadows in *Sentiero* is also discussed by Tommaso Pomilio (2015).

characters move within the brightly-lit room (“Sparisce il buio della notte [...] e non c’è più altro mondo che questa scatola di luce”, *RR2*: 1051-2).

The establishing shot is also observable in key passages in other non-cinematic works, such as *La giornata di uno scrutatore* (1963). In Calvino’s words, this is a story “più di impressioni che di fatti” (*RR2*: 4), and indeed the narration is more discursive. Some descriptions are traditionally literary, as when the narrator describes the Cottolengo building in the second chapter. However, despite the conventional structure, some passages recall the way filmmakers set new scenes in the course of a film. At the beginning of chapter nine, which gains a key position, the character’s troubled pondering on the specificity of the mental asylum and his actual experience is preceded by the suspended atmosphere of the Cottolengo courtyard, a quick montage of images ending on him smoking a cigarette, his eyes looking to the sky:

Era spiovuto. Anche dai cortili desolati si levava un odore di terra e primavera. Qualche rampicante fioriva un muro. Una scolaresca dietro un portico, con in mezzo la monaca, giocava. Si udì un suono lungo, forse un grido, oltre i muri, oltre i tetti: erano gli urli, i mugghi che si raccontava si levassero nel “Cottolengo” giorno e notte dalle corsie degli esseri nascosti? Il suono non si ripeté. Dalla porta d’una cappella si sentiva un coro di donne. Intorno era un andirivieni tra le sezioni elettorali installate un po’ in tutti i padiglioni, in aule al pianterreno o al primo piano. Cartelli bianchi con numeri e frecce nere spiccavano sui pilastri, sotto le vecchie targhe annerite con nomi di santi. Passavano guardie del comune, con cartelle piene di fogli. I poliziotti oziavano, con l’occhio torpido di chi non vede niente. Scrutatori d’altri seggi erano usciti, come Amerigo, a fumare una sigaretta e a fissare l’aria del cielo. (*RR2*: 40)

Through the regular rhythm of the images, underlined by the plain syntax of the text, the courtyard, the wall, the porch, the chapel door, the pillars, the terrifically realistic sounds coming from unseen places are focused and express Amerigo Ormea’s difficulty understanding the reality of Cottolengo and his struggle to establish communication with the people working at the polling place and to empathise with the suffering humanity hidden inside.

6.4. Cinematic characterisation

Moving from para-cinematic techniques to cinematic characterisation, *Marcovaldo* (1963) is a meaningful example of cinematic reference. This is a collection of stories that best exemplifies Calvino's typical mixture of fable and realism. Marcovaldo's character shows features recalling Charlie Chaplin, as he appears inept in most situations; just like Chaplin's tramp, he nonetheless manages somehow to make it through his misfortunes.³¹⁸ The typical hint of melancholy recalls the cinematic character, as in the episode *La pietanziera*, where Marcovaldo's naive exchange of dishes with the bourgeois child at the window leads to a bitter ending. Some comic situations are quite similar or re-used and conveyed through the context of the Italian industrial city, as when Marcovaldo tries to sleep on a bench outside and he is constantly thwarted; the function of the policeman is similar to that in many slapstick comedy films (a sort of lurking nuisance), although in Calvino it is a more good-natured figure. The episodes of *Marcovaldo* are substantially non-cinematic because there is no significant use of formal techniques derived from film language; however, many of the protagonist's gags rely on comic mechanisms already seen in Linder's, Chaplin's and Keaton's classic examples, as when Marcovaldo is almost arrested as he is sawing the top of a billboard to get wood for his fireplace (*Il bosco sull'autostrada*), or when he tries to steal a trout from a restaurant by lowering a fishing line from a high-up window, with all the comedy resulting from his clumsy attempt (*Il giardino dei gatti ostinati*). While these kinds of solutions can be found as far back as Greek comedy or Boccaccio, what is striking here is the briefness of the

³¹⁸ Calvino recalls that when he was young in his household they had a film projector, but his mother was so strict as to prevent him from watching Chaplin's films, because the character of Charlot was "troppo maleducato" (Tornabuoni, 2015: 176). See also Calvino's 1948 article on *Charlot e i finti tonti* where he acknowledges the huge importance of Chaplin "sia nella storia dell'arte cinematografica, sia dal punto di vista del significato sociale dei suoi film" (S2: 1879).

descriptions, the flow of actions that sets the rhythm of the narration. Curiously, in Marcovaldo some features and situations seem to anticipate those of another Italian bungler, Paolo Villaggio's Ugo Fantozzi, a character who drew significantly from these illustrious cinematic ancestors:³¹⁹ it would suffice to compare the cult scenes in which Charlot in *A Dog's Life* (1918) and Fantozzi in *Fantozzi contro tutti* (1980) chew the food stolen from a dish. Anticipating Fantozzi's typical indecision and exhilarating *boutades*, here is poor Marcovaldo in the chattering crowd: "Anche Marcovaldo avrebbe avuto da dire la sua, ma non trovava il momento adatto. Finalmente, tutto d'un fiato, esclamò: 'La marchesa mi ha rubato una trota!' La notizia inaspettata diede nuovi argomenti ai nemici della vecchia" (RR1: 1171). Just as in the above-mentioned comic figures, the ineptitude of the worker and husband is concentrated in Marcovaldo: he has a bossy wife and is exploited at work and he attempts to perform duties he cannot understand, or which he misunderstands, because of his own naivety. What differentiates Marcovaldo's ineptitude from other literary examples, especially from the early twentieth century, is Calvino's treatment: Marcovaldo's ineptitude is substantially rendered through an external focalisation; it is not psychological, but corporal; not internalised, but visually externalised; not a matter of an inadequate thought, but a matter of clumsy gestures and inappropriate reactions to city life.³²⁰ In these episodes, what normally happens is a hyperbolic degeneration of the initial actions, be they Marcovaldo's or his children's (especially in *Il coniglio velenoso*, *Luna e Gnac*, *La pioggia e le foglie*, *Fumo, vento e bolle di sapone*). Note also the paradigmatic difference between *Marcovaldo* and Gianni Celati's *Le avventure di Guizzardi* (1973), where the awkward character, his clumsiness, the hyperbolic situations and

³¹⁹ The character first appeared in Villaggio's book *Fantozzi* (1971) and, notoriously, in a number of subsequent books and films (e.g. *Fantozzi*, 1975; *Il secondo tragico Fantozzi*, 1976) that are extremely popular in Italy. Note that Villaggio's first book was laid out, like *Marcovaldo*, in short episodes grouped in four sections about Fantozzi in spring, summer, autumn and winter.

³²⁰ On Calvino and comedy see Luca Clerici and Bruno Falchetto (1994); see, particularly, Falchetto (1994: 63-8) on gestures.

comic mechanisms are conveyed first and foremost by a purposefully rambling syntax, while images do not achieve the accuracy and iconic substance observable in Calvino.

6.5. Fully-cinematic pages

A final striking example of remediation of para-cinematic techniques is in *La signora Paulatim* (1958), included in *Racconti*. Mrs Paulatim's arrival at the factory is described by a continuous alternation of tracking and POV shots (in this story, indeed, the reader never 'sees' Mrs Paulatim's face). In the first part, the reader follows the lady making her way through the hallways, rooms, and storage rooms of her factory, where she is greeted by her workers. The sudden appearance of spaces and objects handled by the workers is rendered through her internal ocularisation. In the first part of the story, the perspective is set on the lady's eye and her snooty walking and greeting. The sequence of images is given without the slightest comment by the narrator:

Verso un camion avanzano delle casse, a mezz'aria, sopra gambe un po' curve, in vecchi pantaloni, procedono a piccoli passi veloci, quasi di corsa. Dal retro del camion buio e rimbombante di voci sporgono grosse braccia nude.

- Buongiorno, signora Paulatim!

- Buongiorno. [...]

I berretti bianchi sono chini sul nastro dove avanzano i tubetti confezionati nell'astuccio, i tubetti da confezionare, i tubetti da chiudere, i tubetti da ovattare, i tubetti da riempire di dodici compresse, i tubetti da incollarci sopra l'etichetta "Paulatim": le operaie sono dritte e ferme da una parte e dall'altra, tranne una sorvegliante ogni squadra che si muove intorno e solo quella dice per tutte:

- Buongiorno, signora Paulatim.

- Buongiorno. (RR2: 1064-5)

Similar to the descriptions already found in Robbe-Grillet and, partially, in Pirandello, the narrative is completely visual, and the subjective-objective dialectic benefits from the visual 'assault' of obsessive images and the hammering of exclamations: evidently, Mrs. Paulatim is

anxiously walking through the corridors and rooms, and the reader soon understands her intentions. The frantic, almost Eiseinsteinian, montage of images finds its meaning and its aesthetical function in the second part of the story, where the theme of the bourgeois frenzy is reflected through the crisis of marriage.

There are so many filmic passages in this story that it would be pedantic to account for all of them. Particularly, I emphasise just three: the use of parallel montage in the passages about Mr. and Mrs. Paulatim moving inside and outside of their house and garden, which functions as a further device generating chopped, suspended sequences; the all-filmic, ground-level positioning of the point of view ‘framing’ the soles of the factory usher when the lady enters (“da quasi verticali s’abbassano appiattendosi sul pavimento” *RR2*: 1064) – which is also a very expressive zero ocularisation by the para-cinematic narrator; and, finally, the cinematic match cut toward the ending, when the image of the birds freed from the cage by the couple’s children is juxtaposed with the image of the workers coming out and drifting away from the factory (“uno stormo” in both cases, 1071-2). In this story one can also observe a process of humanisation of objects, or a general levelling of objects and human beings. Most of the grammatical subjects of the sentences are inanimate. This is an aesthetic characteristic of filmic representation (cf. Cohen 1979), and a typical outcome of the *école du regard* (it is no

surprise that *Mrs Paulatim*'s publishing date is 1958).³²¹ Calvino's stylistic choices imitate different cinematic techniques and contribute to strengthening the ethical topic of the story visually. It is only with the final match cut that a conciliatory analogy counterbalances the excited *tour de force* of the spouses.

6.6. Calvino and the rhetoric of cinema

As Calvino explained in *Autobiografia di uno spettatore* in 1974, he was greatly fascinated by American and French films of the 1930s: through the cultural and geographical 'distance' of these films he found a way to escape the oppressive representation of life of many Italian films during Fascism. In particular, the Hollywood model provided him with a source of stylised narrative devices, just like the traditional fairy tales he would later explore together with Vladimir Y. Propp's studies on folktales.³²² In American movies the young Calvino could give free rein to his imagination and also experience a form of narration endowed with its own

³²¹ In his negative review of *Racconti* Renato Barilli observed that the objects "si ingrandiscono e premono da ogni parte sullo schermo visivo pretendendo di assumere l'iniziativa". (*RR2*: 1297). See also Calvino's indirect reaction in his article *Il mare dell'oggettività* (1960), where he wonders about the current trend in literature: "Questo seguito di dati oggettivi che diventano racconto, svolgimento di un processo mentale, è necessariamente l'annullamento della coscienza o non può essere visto pure come una via per la sua affermazione, per esser certi di che cosa veramente la coscienza è, di qual è il posto che occupiamo nella sterminata distesa delle cose? [...] Dalla letteratura dell'oggettività alla letteratura della coscienza: così vorremmo orientare la lettura di un'ingente zona della produzione creativa d'oggi, ora secondando ora forzando l'intenzione degli autori" (*SI*: 58-9). Finally, consider that the theme reappears in this passage in *Palomar*: "Ma sarà proprio giusto, fare così? – riflette ancora – o non è un appiattire la persona umana al livello delle cose, considerarla un oggetto, e quel che è peggio, considerare oggetto ciò che nella persona è specifico del sesso femminile?" (*RR2*: 881). See also Bonsaver (1995) on Calvino, the neo-avant-garde and the literary debate of the 1960s.

³²² Calvino reviewed Propp's *The Historical Roots of the Fairy-Tale* (Russian ed. 1946; Italian ed. 1949; 1972), in 'L'Unità' (*S2*: 1541-3). Propp's most famous study *Morphology of the Folktale* (Russian ed. 1928) was translated in French in 1965 and then in Italian (Propp, 1966). See Alberto Mario Cirese (1972) for a discussion of certain problems related to these editions and translations. Calvino published his *Fiabe italiane* in 1956 (Calvino 1993a).

formal conventions and rhetoric, which were particularly evident in certain stereotyped characters such as the masculine but good-hearted hero or the blonde *femme fatale*.³²³ Moreover, going to the cinema made him accustomed to understanding stories not from the beginning, but starting from random points. As a teenager, his strict parents did not always allow him to go out in the afternoon (he would still go, even watching two films back to back on the sly): this is not a negligible fact considering he would write a patchwork-novel such as *Se una notte d'inverno un viaggiatore* (1979) some fifty years later. Movies shaped Calvino's imagination and sharpened his attention to visual detail and the meaning of images. He considered the image as the quintessence of cinema and was less interested in the function of dialogue. In fact, over the years he maintained the importance of silent films and filmmakers relying on the pure power of images to convey meaning.³²⁴

Cinema played a crucial role in Calvino's life and in his "visual writing" (Ricci 1989), gradually replacing the visual influence of the comics he used to read during his childhood, some of which were without speech balloons (e.g. 'Il corriere dei piccoli').³²⁵ Even though Calvino's style cannot be considered openly cinematic, I observe that he integrated para-

³²³ He wrote in 1953: "Il mio cinema ideale resta – forse perché mi ha nutrito quotidianamente per tutti gli anni della mia adolescenza – quello americano dell'anteguerra, col suo catalogo di divi-personaggi, di convenzioni-situazioni, che corrispondevano ad altrettante realtà o ad altrettante ipocrisie anch'esse storicamente reali e importanti; quei film mi divertivo a vederli, e mi divertivo ancor di più a rifletterci sopra, a smontarli, a demolirli, a sceverare il vero dal falso, cosicché anche quelli brutti erano interessanti e istruttivi. Quello era un cinema che non aveva niente a che fare con la letteratura sua contemporanea: aveva creato un suo linguaggio – e una sua retorica – autonomi" (S2: 1888). He restated his penchant for American films some decades later as well: "Sono sempre i film americani – parlo di quelli più nuovi – che hanno da comunicare qualcosa di più inedito" (RR3: 43).

³²⁴ From this derives, for example, his interest in Michelangelo Antonioni's cinema, with its focus on spaces, be they natural or urban, able to articulate a visual discourse on human condition. He wrote in 1962: "Un cinema dell'occhio puro che è proprio il contrario del romanzo del puro *regard*: qui ogni cosa appare nella pienezza dei suoi significati storico-sociali" (S2: 1927).

³²⁵ Calvino stressed the key role of comics strips: "Parlo di una parte della mia vita che va dai tre anni ai tredici, prima che la passione per il cinema diventasse una possessione assoluta che durò per tutta l'adolescenza. Anzi, credo che il periodo decisivo sia stato tra i tre e i sei anni, prima che io imparassi a leggere. [...] La lettura delle figure senza parole è stata certo per me una scuola di fabulazione, di stilizzazione, di composizione dell'immagine" (S1: 708-9). On Calvino and comics see Battistini (2007).

cinematic techniques in his writing in several works. Being an extremely receptive artist, he was able to absorb new and ever-changing inspirations, such as the intrinsic features and cultural legacy of cinema and remediate them on the written page. It was an interart connection, and the fact that most of Calvino's works are not entirely or straightforwardly cinematic, but display a range of cinematic features, testifies to the conceptual adaptability and critical usefulness of the cinematic mode in fiction. Examining the development of Calvino's writing in this respect, I can ultimately summarise that the cinematic mode tends to inform more frequently his realistic production from *Ultimo viene il corvo* to *Racconti* to *Palomar*. However, it also constitutes an important feature of other narratives whose realism is blended with fable, such as *Il sentiero dei nidi di ragno* or *Marcovaldo*. In the *Antenati* trilogy Calvino's interests and aims were evidently different. Similarly, his 'cosmicomic' and 'semiotic' later fictions of the mid-Sixties are scarcely cinematic as well.³²⁶ The visibility of his writing becomes more abstract and geometric in these works. On the contrary, within his more realistic production some cinematic references are disseminated, especially in terms of evocation and partial imitation; moreover, implicit formal imitation emerges systematically in specific instances. Ultimately, the cinematic mode is observable in a range of works as an additional quality of the texts.

³²⁶ See Bonsaver (1994, 1995b) on Calvino's 'semiotic' period.

CONCLUSION

This research has aimed to provide a novel contribution to knowledge in the field of studies devoted to the interconnection between cinema and literature. It has attempted to develop a new, integrated theoretical and transnational perspective on the cinematisation of fiction in the twentieth century and to solve methodological issues related to the notions of influence and convergence of media and aesthetics models.

My approach integrates the critical perspectives of intermediality theories and genre theories, while providing new categories for narratological research. It shows how an interdisciplinary and eclectic method can trigger new insight on a topic previously addressed through more restricted perspectives. It also provides a solid terminology and functional model to assess the cinematisation of writing across a wide variety of texts and prevents ahistorical readings. The main difference between this work and parts of previous research lies in the fact that not only does it describe the use of specific cinematic techniques in literature, but it also provides supplementary categories that may enable the reader to better understand the evolution of modern and contemporary fiction in relation to the emergence and evolution of film.

Therefore, this study contributes significantly to the theoretical framework applicable to the cinema-literature debate. It puts forth a model based on four key variables: (1) the type of intermedial reference, which triggers medially-related cognitive schemata and interferes with the overall narrative contract of the written text; (2) the flattening of the narrative relief, which establishes an effect of similitude on the level of temporality and narrative rhythm; (3) the enactment of a para-cinematic narration, which conveys the remediation of such narrative relief, as well as other effects of temporal manipulation, ocularisation, auricularisation, and possible cinematic techniques in writing, thereby determining its cinema-derived rhetoric; (4)

the inclusion of filmic traits in specific subgenres in terms of modulation, which completes the generic repertoire of fictional texts and contributes to their complexity. The key point I wished to highlight is that the *visual* of cinema is remediated in cinematic fiction jointly with the *temporal* level, and may contribute to the overall discursive *rhetoric* deployed on the page. The concept of cinematic mode therefore proves a valuable critical tool to improve close-reading practice, refine historical assessment, and further transnational perspectives on the impact of film on fiction. This model should hopefully influence a critical debate on film features in fiction that has too often been stuck on the generic visual quality of texts, if not on looser and imaginative analogies between paper and celluloid, pen and camera, or eye and lens.

This study may potentially open new research threads as well. The model outlined here would greatly benefit from further research on eighteenth- and nineteenth-century novels, which could be critically assessed according to the category of proto-cinematic fiction. The general implication of the advent of cinema has already been discussed in the introduction and elsewhere; however, a closer focus on fictional works preceding the film age would further pinpoint the difference between the techniques observable in proto-cinematic and cinematic fiction, especially in relation to the practice of montage and the use of techniques such as the POV and establishing shot. A more extended focus on fiction preceding the film age may thus provide a further countercheck that the advent and development of cinema consistently interfered with the evolution of much of twentieth-century fiction, thereby matching or substituting, among other things, the influence of theatre and painting. As the theoretical underpinnings of my research are firmly linked to the authorial dimension, pre-cinematic fiction could never be referred to as properly cinematic; however, further analysis would arguably reveal a gradual orientation of fictional writing towards the film form and connect the emergence of a new typology of fiction in the twentieth century to both the *intra-medial* evolution of genres and the *inter-medial* reference to technical devices and arts, among which the film medium was so relevant.

A specific additional area that would evidently benefit from the application of the present model is that of the Anglo-American modernist novels from the 1920s to the 1940s, as well as subsequent international works whose styles appear as fully or in part derived from these models. Among others, Italian works of fiction that have been attached to the influence of modern and contemporary Anglo-American literature, as well as fiction related to the French examples of the New Novel, show promise as a good speculative basis for the assessment of the cinematisation of writing in modern and postmodern literature. A further development of such a line of research would also lead to the assessment of similar phenomena in the twenty-first century. In particular, research on this period would shed light on the remediation of other contemporary media and technological devices; but also on how cinema has maintained or modified its power of fascination for present-day writers against concurrent media. Finally, cognitive research on para-cinematic visualisation during reading would presumably integrate the proposed model and enhance its scientific validity.³²⁷

My case studies are only a small sample of texts that have remediated the filmic in different ways. On the narrower level of the cinematisation of writing, it has emerged that the remediation of film has been enacted through a surprising variety of styles and according to different degrees of intermedial reference. Beyond generally contributing to a certain degree of literary experimentalism, I have observed it has functioned as a way to: convey the cinematic imagination of characters in equivocal terms, by means of similitude or analogy, as in *Cinematografo cerebrale*, *Quaderni di Serafino Gubbio operatore*, *Aracoeli*; objectify the storyworld to increase vividness and suspense in *The Maltese Falcon*; introduce a new fragmentation and pace

³²⁷ On the other hand, this study raises one lateral issue that I wish to outline for clarity's sake. My research would greatly benefit from a broadening of the linguistic-analytic component. In this sense, while Romance, Germanic and Slavonic languages may arguably be integrated in the present model, thereby refining it, specifically as far as the concept of narrative relief is concerned, on the other hand languages that belong to more distant linguistic families might raise issues of compatibility.

in narratives such as *Film parlé*, *Uomini e no*, *La signora Paulatim*; render the character's subjective perception, confound temporal levels and enhance the visual slant in *La Jalousie*; introduce a new awareness of the rhetoric of the written and audiovisual media and translate a newly-elaborated stylistic approach from the medium of film to fiction, as in *Teorema*; reshape cinematically a narrative originally conceived in traditional literary terms through the suggestion of montage, as in *Piazza d'Italia*; enhance the clarity and exactitude of prose writing, add new briskness, create surprising temporal effects and contribute to the effectiveness of characterisation, as in Calvino.

In general, the cinematic mode contributed to pushing the narrative styles towards mimicking the aspect of volatility typical of rapidly changing, equivocal, and, for some, frightening times. This aspect, in particular, matched with the gradual epistemological turn in modern and contemporary literature that favoured partial representations of the world against totalising ones; the fragmentation of the self, the use of decentered and multi-fold perspectives, against the linear depiction of a private or collective epic; the sudden embedding of temporal levels drawn from both the external world and interior states of mind, against the plain and detailed plotting of the narrative events. In some of these examples, the cinematic mode mirrors the hustle of contemporary life, the swift mutability of social forces, the mounting solitude of individuals, and the consequent necessity for the authors to find suitable tools to render these issues on the page. Most protagonists of these stories are highly troubled individuals. As the cinematic mode is attached to the fundamental narrating agency behind the organisation of texts (the narrator), it seems to have provided authors with a stylistic means to alternatively render said troubles with greater visual and temporal immediacy (*The Maltese Falcon*, *Film parlé*, *Uomini e no*, *La Jalousie*), or on the contrary to hypermediate discursively those troubles with reference to the film form (*Cinematografo cerebrale*, *Quaderni di Serafino Gubbio operatore*, *Aracoeli*). In the first case, the cinematic mode enhances the effect of watching the exterior unfolding of the storyworld just 'as if' at the cinema or, alternatively, the effect of

aligning more immersively with the perspectives of characters. In the second case, the hypermediation through cinema enables the authors to complicate the narrative texture and spell out their anxiety for the times to come. Some cases stand in between: particularly, in *Teorema* and *Piazza d'Italia*, where the characters' troubles stem from the disruption or repetition of power dynamics, the cinematic mode contributes to singling out meaningful episodes across family members and shaping the narrative account with an economy of style that was unthinkable in traditionally literary terms.

Further examples, which I have already partly verified and would require supplementary research to be fully implemented, appear to follow and integrate the logic of the model presented here. They include the entire narratives, or at least part of, James Joyce's *Ulysses* (1922), John Dos Passos's *Manhattan Transfer* (1925), Virginia Woolf's *To the Lighthouse* (1927), Alfred Döblin's *Berlin Alexanderplatz* (1929), Albert Camus's *L'Étranger* (1942), Vasco Pratolini's *Cronache di poveri amanti* (1947), Alain Robbe-Grillet's *Le Voyeur* (1955), Pier Paolo Pasolini's *Ragazzi di vita* (1955) and *Petrolio* (1991), John Updike's *Rabbit, Run* (1960), Vincenzo Cerami's *Un borghese piccolo piccolo* (1976), James Ballard's *The 60 Minutes Zoom* (1976), Andrea De Carlo's *Treno di panna* (1981) and *Uccelli da gabbia e da voliera* (1982), Carlo Lucarelli's *Almost Blue* (1997), and Don DeLillo's *Underworld* (1997). The cinematic mode appears intermittently or throughout these works and triggers a variety of effects, thereby confirming the validity of its critical function. Therefore, it summarises a rigorous but flexible – in short, reasonable – model. The connection of the cinematic mode with the marked heterogeneity of the works mentioned does not go against the grain of literary discussion, because as a genre category it is meant here to describe an additional feature of the texts, but certainly not their principal one. Nevertheless, the cinematic mode has been an important structural and stylistic component of a variety of works of fiction in the modern and contemporary age. As such, its evaluation enables criticism to draw connections across an enlarged group of 'family members' sharing recognisable traits.

Finally, this research opens up further suggestions. Following Fowler's model, a legitimate question could be whether it is possible to see cinematic fiction as a *kind* of novel emerging through the twentieth-century literary system. According to Kress (2010: 97), every time society "foregrounds" different modes (such as writing, moving image or sound) against others, it is done thanks to their cultural and ideological roles. It is well known that, from its inception the novel has progressively 'novelised' most other genres, especially those related to orality, as Bakhtin explained in a famous essay (cf. Bakhtin 1982). On the other hand, the impact of optical devices and cinema on the emergence of the modernist novel has already been strongly claimed; and, in turn, the spread of modernism had an impact on dozens of writers in the following decades. Therefore, to put my topic in Bakhtinian terms, one may wonder whether the cinematisation of fiction has ultimately been so strong as to produce a new historical and overarching paradigm, an increasingly evident shift in comparison with the pre-cinematic way of creating stories in words. But this would be the subject of a separate study.

APPENDIX



(Fig. 1)



(Fig. 2)



(Fig. 3)



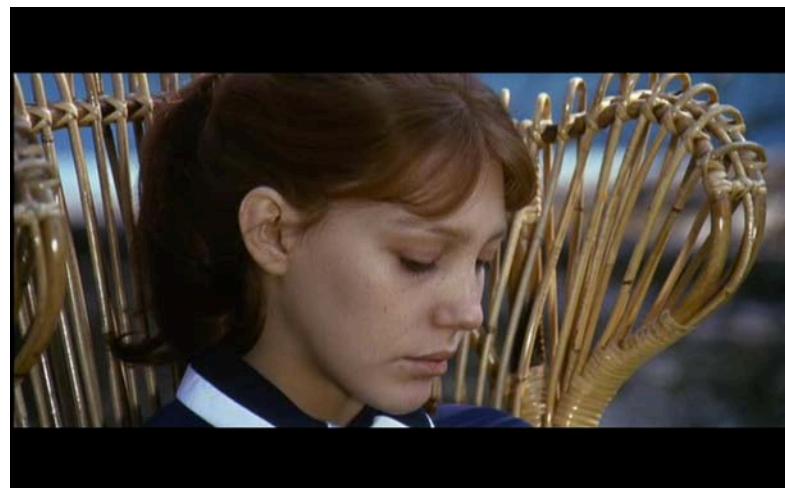
(Fig. 4)



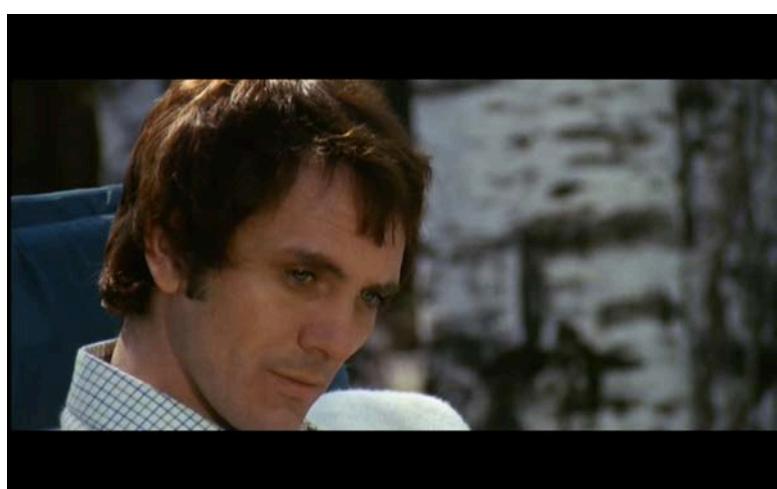
(Fig. 5)



(Fig. 6)



(Fig. 7)



(Fig. 8)



(Fig. 9)

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