Film-induced affect as a witness emotion

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Abstract

Traditional narrative film presents the viewer with the illusion that he or she is physically
present in a fictional world, a witness to the events and characters involved in that world.
Witnesses cannot participate in events, nor can they command their movements and views.
It is the film’s narration that dictates what the viewers see, how they see it and when.
Emotion in the film viewer is a response to this predicament. It has been proposed that
interest is the central emotion in film viewing. Interest is the urge to watch and actively
anticipate further developments in the expectation of a reward. The film’s control of the
viewers’ perceptions of events imposes on them special attitudes towards those events and
characters. The events themselves together with the attitudes coloring them determine the
viewers’ emotions. Attitudes affect the witness’ insight into the significance of the situation
in the fictional world to the characters involved. Understanding of the significance of events
for a character is the basis of empathic emotion, whereas abstraction from their meaning to
characters underlies non-empathetic emotion. Sympathy is the major empathic emotion in
film viewing. Finally, it is argued that the role of the film as an artefact, to be distinguished
from the illusion of a fictional world it presents, in creating emotion is limited.

1. Introduction

Why do adults cry when they see a film? Many viewers of film melodrama
report that they cannot help crying when witnessing a lost child returning home, or
a couple being reunited after a long series of misunderstandings. What is puzzling
in the response is that, on the one hand, it shows signs of genuine emotion, but on
the other hand, we must assume that viewers are aware that they are watching a

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staged scene rather than a real event. Other genres of fiction film do not evoke tears but quite the opposite, laughter, or intense fear. Whatever the emotional response elicited by various genres, it could, for the reason mentioned, strike thoughtful observers as odd, if not silly, every single time. They may wonder in particular whether the emotion is in fact 'genuine'. In its full complexity this is an issue too complicated to deal with in this article. Elsewhere, I have argued in favor of the genuineness of emotion. Film viewers have real emotions, despite their knowledge that they are watching an artefact. The human system of emotions is sensitive to the kind of information provided by the cinematic illusion, to the degree that only a tiny bit of goodwill on the part of the viewer is needed for all preconditions for genuine emotion to be satisfied (Tan, in press).

In this contribution, my aim is limited to showing how the film stimulus is typically perceived by the viewer and how perception and comprehension contribute to emotion, or, more precisely, how they are part of the process of emotion. My description of the film stimulus will be based largely on David Bordwell's account of narration in the classical Hollywood cinema (Bordwell, 1985a,b). In order to relate it to the process of emotion, and to provide a framework for speculation on the genuineness of emotion in the cinema, we have to define 'emotion'. Obviously, in order to avoid circularity of reasoning, we need a conception of emotion that is general and plausible in contexts completely unrelated to film viewing. It is only if we know what an emotion is outside the cinema, that we can decide to what degree the film viewer's experience is a case in point.

2. What is an emotion?

The functional view of emotion suggests a set of criteria for defining what is and what is not an emotion. Emotions can be seen as functional to realizing the needs of the individual in its transaction with the world. Sometimes a situation demands immediate action. In that case, the tendency of emotions to take over reasoning is functional: a decision in favor of any line of action is better than no timely decision at all. However, the control emotions exert on cognitive processes in non-urgent situations can also be understood as functional. It underlines the things that matter to the individual in a given situation and how they matter. DeSousa compares the emotions involved – such as grief and envy – with "judgements, in the sense that they are what we see the world 'in terms of' " (DeSousa, 1987: 196). Or, as Lazarus (1991) observes, emotion lends personal significance to situations and events.

The most complete elaboration of the functional perspective can be found in Frijda's (1986) theory of the emotions. In addition, this theory is eminently suited

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1 The subject has been dealt with in more detail by only a few contemporary film theorists (notably Carroll, 1990; Grodal, 1993; Peters, 1989; Smith, 1991). David Bordwell, who has done pioneering work in cognitive film theory, has recently expressed the need for a theory of film affect, referring to the fact that progress has been made in the study of film comprehension (Bordwell, 1989; 1992).
to our purposes, much more so than theoretical proposals, because it gives an account of emotional experience, focusing especially the meaning of the stimulus—which in our case is the film. In emotions, the world assumes a very specific appearance to the subject. The world does not do this completely on its own; there must be something in the subject that interacts with the stimulus to determine both the relevance and meaning of situations in the world. The subject has ‘concerns’, more or less stable preferences for certain states of the world. These concerns represent what matters to the subject. Thus, humans have concerns for safety, intimacy and a sense of belonging, sufficient cognitive grasp, and diversity of stimulation. They can be conceptually compared with needs and motives. Situations in the world may be relevant to concerns, i.e. favor or threaten realization of concerns. When this is the case, certain aspects of the situation or any activities in which the subjects are involved, may serve to distract their attention and prevent them from acting adequately. The emotions constitute a powerful system for realizing concerns, counter to competing circumstances and tendencies in the subject. Emotions signal the relevance of the situation to concerns, and urge action according to the discrepancy between situation and concern.

In emotions, an action tendency is caused by appraisal of the significance of a situation, both in terms of concerns and possible courses of action. For instance, anger involves an urge to retaliate against what is perceived as intentional damage to something important and valued, e.g. a goal, a loved one, a belief. In sorrow the change in action tendency is a diffuse reduction in action readiness due to the perceived loss of something of concern. Action tendencies consist of a change in action readiness. Action readiness may involve general activation or specific relational behavior, such as approaching, avoiding, running away, hiding from sight, helping, and inflicting harm. Both action tendency and the emotional significance of a situation are the basis of emotional experience. An encounter with an opponent seen as dangerous, can incite an urge to flee. An awareness of both danger and the flight tendency may be the result. The appraisal of the situation results in the representation of emotional meaning structures that can be thought to consist of elementary features or ‘components’. Some components are necessary for emotion to exist at all, such as relevance to concerns, positive or negative character of objects, reality, objectivity, and difficulty. Others are part of the meaning structure of some emotions only, for example, certainty, familiarity, intention, controllability. Each emotion has its unique meaning structure in terms of a pattern of components.

The core of the theory can be summarized in a number of basic tenets or laws (see Frijda, 1986: ch. 9 and Frijda, 1988). They are the following:

1. Emotions can only arise from events that have some relevance to the subject.

This ‘Law of concern’ follows directly from the functional perspective on emotion. An emotion signals the presence of a concern, and if a concern is realized, or damaged, an emotion occurs.

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2 The concepts are not, however, identical. See Frijda (1986).
(2) Emotions reflect the meaning of events (‘Law of situational meaning’). Emotion renders manifest how the situation relates to concerns and what possible courses of action it offers.

(3) Reality is a critical component of emotional meaning (‘Law of apparent reality’). Concerns cannot be endangered unless the situation has some reality, that is, in the eye of the subject.

(4) Emotions arise in reaction to change (‘Law of change’). Generally, stimuli are emotional by reference to something else, for instance the near future, as in acute fear, or the near past as in relief, something that could have happened but did not happen, as in guilt over one’s nearly fatal mistake, or an expectation, as in surprise.

(5) Emotions tend to persist (‘Law of closure’). Once elicited, appraisal of the situation and action readiness are difficult to control until the emotional stimulus has been removed.

(6) Emotions tend to elicit a secondary impulse toward moderation (‘Law of care for consequence’). Thus, completely blind rage is rare. The tendency towards control is also emotional. The stimulus for it is any anticipation of adverse consequences in the future.

It should be noted that the theory has been presented here in grossly simplified terms. Thus, basic tenets have been reduced to the most simple propositions, sometimes combining several ‘laws’ of emotion. In addition, my representation of the Law of Situational Meaning may incorrectly suggest that the appraisal of emotional meaning is a one-shot process. In fact, appraisal is a complex process, involving more than one stage. Frijda (1993) distinguishes primary appraisal, which can be regarded as an antecedent of emotion, from secondary appraisal, which is part of the emotional response once it has been elicited. Primary appraisal is a very elementary process, which cannot meaningfully be called cognitive in some cases. It primarily invokes establishing the link between the event and the individual’s concerns. Secondary appraisal requires a great deal more of cognitive elaboration and inferencing. It provides the contents of emotional experience, which may be completely at variance with antecedent appraisal.

In spite of these and other complications, the description given earlier of emotion indicates clearly what does not count as an emotion. Thus, general arousal, tears or cursing are not, in themselves, emotions, nor are mere feelings of euphoria or apathy emotions, as long as no emotional stimulus or meaning can be identified or no concern is at stake (basic tenets 1 and 3). And the smile that disappears abruptly when one has turned is a sign of politeness rather than of friendly sympathy, see tenet 5.

3. The invisible witness

3.1. The diegetic effect

Film establishes a number of illusions that are difficult to escape. The basic illusion is, of course, that of movement, where in fact a series of stills is perceived.
This illusion cannot be escaped, because it resides in the anatomy of the brain. Given the usual circumstances of projection, one cannot help seeing movement. Moreover, there is the illusion that Noel Burch dubbed the diegetic effect (Burch, 1979: 19), a twofold illusion, as we conceive of it. First, there is an awareness of a space in which one is present. It is not limited to what is immediately shown on screen. Michotte (1948) notes that the screen is not experienced as an abrupt border. It seems as if the scene extends well beyond the sides of the screen, and protrudes into the cinema. The screen is just a window giving access to a completely fictional world. Second, the viewer experiences the fictional space as his or her physical environment. If this aspect of the diegetic effect is not localized in a number of brain cells, like the illusion of movement, it has an objective basis in a number of perceptual phenomena. Gibson has noted that the movement in the scene and especially the movement of the camera are responsible “... for the empathy that grips us in the cinema. We are onlookers in the situation, to be sure, not participants, but we are in it, we are oriented to it, and we can adopt points of observation in its space” (Gibson, 1979: 298). Movement within the scene simulates a number of ‘ecological invariants’, as Gibson terms them, which in perception of the real world are automatically picked up. For instance, camera movement, like the movement of the head, gives rise to motion parallax crucial for perception of depth. Camera movement perpendicular to the screen creates an especially strong impression of ego motion into depth. In addition, when the camera is moving sideways parallel to the screen, objects nearer to it move faster than those further away and closer to the horizon. They also move in the opposite direction to them, thus evoking an immediate sense of ego motion. In these cases, the same information that induces perceptual experience in the real world is responsible for the sense of depth and direction of movement in the cinema.

The gripping effects of the cinema are facilitated by social practices as well as by typical viewing conditions, such as darkness and sound insulation. Viewers may stimulate one another to participate in the diegetic effect. Movies are visited by small groups of patrons, which enhances overt utterance of reactions. Single patrons, in contrast, tend to spread far apart, thus preventing mutual inhibition of overt reaction (Rabbie and Visser, 1984). Overt reactions may, in turn, enhance the diegetic effect, that is, make it harder for the individual viewer to try to escape from it.

The flow of time seems as linear and uninterrupted as in the real world. Flow is forward, the flashback is rarely used and if it is, only with circumspection. At least within separate scenes, all discontinuity is avoided, despite the fact that “the

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3 A complete account of why and how movement is seen in the cinema has not yet been given. Recently, the anatomy and neurophysiology of a motion pathway, originating in some retina cells, and extending into the visual cortex is beginning to become clear (see e.g. Movshon, 1990).

4 As is probably known, this is the essential difference between static and dynamic displays. In looking at static pictures, the illusion of depth is optimal when viewing it monocularly from the point of observation. However, the illusion can only be maintained by keeping the head – and the eye, for that matter – fixated.
classical cinema is a cinema of cutting; the single shot sequence is very rare” (Bordwell, 1985b: 46). When they do occur at all, any interruptions are made smooth through use of conventionalized devices, such as the *dissolve*. Classical editing has reached a high degree of perfection in simulating a smooth and equally paced continuity of the action. It may take the viewers some effort to construct the fictional world in time and space, but this effort is carefully kept within narrow bounds. The seemingly uninterrupted forward flow of time is greatly sustained by the film’s causal structure. Expectations of events to come, set up by earlier ones, direct the viewers’ attention towards the future. (All foregoing observations on flow of time derive from Bordwell, 1985a.)

The diegetic effect is permanently in operation and is very hard to escape. Apparent motion is experienced unless the viewers look away from the screen. Apparent motion in traditional cinema, in turn, creates a sense of depth and ego movement that together cause the illusion of physical presence in the world of the story told in the film.

The diegetic effect supports film-induced emotion in elementary ways. For one thing, the viewers’ illusion of being physically present in the scene results in a strong impression of reality. A true-to-life sensory experience is mimicked as closely as possible, and requires hardly any cognitive elaboration on the part of the viewer. Moreover, the sensory quality of stimuli is among the most effective indicators of reality, necessary for any emotion to occur (Frijda, 1988). Other forms of narrative, such as written stories, also give the viewer the illusion of the subject being present in the fictional world. However, film has a distinct advantage when spatiotemporal aspects of the stimulus are major causes of emotion. The sight of a giant spider in a film evokes more fear than do the words ‘giant spider’ in a written narrative. Furthermore, proximity of a negative event, a cause for fear, has a one-to-one correspondence to the spatiotemporal aspects of the film stimulus. A spider approaching the sleeping James Bond, or the classical burning fuse of a bomb evokes fear in film viewers because their appraisal of spatial proximity is based on an immediate and one-to-one perceptual equivalent that is missing in other forms of narration.

In addition, staging creates high levels of apparent reality that evoke emotions. The viewers’ sense of being in the scene is complemented by their easy recognition of the relevant objects in the fictional world. In traditional films, realistic sensory impression is created by stylizing events, settings and characters to resemble their typical real-life counterparts. Many events and settings are easily evoked by showing instances of natural categories (Rosch, 1978) with high prototype-value. Prototypes may, in fact, be more typical than any instance occurring in reality outside the cinema. In her review of studies into the effectiveness of displaying emotion in acting, Konijn (1994) discusses evidence that the acted expression of an emotion may be recognized more readily than spontaneous expression of the same emotion. Readily recognizable characters are the result of casting with some cultural stereotype in mind. Expression of gender, for instance, answers current conceptions of sex roles, although it may be difficult to distinguish more fundamental, biological categories relevant for perception – innate releasers, invariants.
in gait and posture – from cultural ones. Much of traditional cinema’s craftsmanship, be it mise-en-scène, photography or acting, lies in ‘naturalizing’ cultural realities.

3.2. Film as an artefact

In addition to its ability to bring some fictional world to life, film, like all forms of representational art, is also perceived as an artefact. When subjected to an analysis that goes beyond the diegetic effect, it exhibits a variety of structures. Some are related to the way in which fictional events have been selected and arranged, such as segmentation and plot structure. Others are related to the precise manner in which events are depicted. Framing, camera motion, staging, acting and other techniques all have some structure. At times, structures are interrelated in complex ways. For instance, acting and camera motion are interdependent, and plot pattern poses constraints on film technique.

There is ample consensus among film theorists that the artefact in traditional cinema is concealed behind the fictional world. Almost every effort is made to polish away traces of the production process. Where narration is visible, for instance in the story’s exposition phase, or in scene boundaries, it is highly conventionalized, making it much less conspicuous than it could be. The diegetic effect, then, prevails over the artefact. To be sure, there are exceptions to the rule, notably the fact that some genres offer room for showing cinematic structure (or ‘form’) more or less for its own sake. The best example is probably the classical musical, where there is a show of dance and character movement which far surpasses the spectacle, instead making specific cinematic patterns to be enjoyed for their own sake. Busby Berkeley’s choreography shows pleasing spatial patterns actually competing with depth of diegetic space. In fact, films of virtually all genres contain moments when the non-analytic viewer is struck by some conspicuous use of cinematic means, even if in arriving at the diegetic effect. Camera movement can be perceived and enjoyed for its own sake, props and settings may elicit admiration, and perhaps the most common, acting can be perceived as intelligent, inventive, convincing, etcetera. From time to time, then, the artefact is seen. There may be even a paradox at work, in that the more profound the illusion of witnessing actual events, the more reason to realize the skilfulness needed to achieve it.

We could call emotion related to (aspects of) the artefact ‘Artefact-based emotion’, and emotion stimulated by (elements of) the fictional world ‘Fiction-based emotion’. A-emotions include enjoyment, admiration, wonder (as when a spectacle looks technically impossible), and others. F-emotion may be dominant in traditional films, but A-emotion is certainly not uncommon. Even if the traces of the production process have been carefully wiped out, or exactly because they are, the viewers may be moved by the subtlety in applying means. Of course, the viewers’ attention for the artefact is a relevant factor in the occurrence of A-emotion. An analytic mode of viewing, which is not natural among common film spectators of traditional film, may result in more A-emotion.
3.3. Narration as external control of vantage point

The diegetic effect is not restricted to the viewers’ illusion of being present in the fictional world. The viewers are also given the strong impression that their movement and sight is being controlled. It is the film, or more precisely, the film’s narration that determines what the viewers see, when they see it and how. As viewers, we adopt a variety of points of observation in space, but the selection and timing of them are completely beyond our control. It is the film that imposes them upon us. The viewers are aware to some extent of the selection being made by some instance controlling their view. That sense of being controlled may add to the feeling that the fictional world exists independently of the viewers’ world. Film establishes the impression that a look at a part of space other than the one being shown on the screen, would still show some part of the same world. There is a continuous sense of an extended ‘offscreen’ space, created by camera movement, editing, and by sound.

A similar point can be made regarding the fictional world’s temporal dimension. The viewers are aware that the fictional world extends both backward and forward from any moment of the action presented in time. Control of view involves temporal in addition to spatial selection. Narration determines which of the complete series of events is shown, and in what order. Even if we see only part of it, the fictional world is there. It was there before the film started to provide access to it, and will not necessarily cease to exist once the film ends. In other words, what happens in the fictional world is almost immediately perceived as ‘objective’. It is accepted as a given beyond the viewer’s will or particular beliefs. Even if objectivity is linked to cultural beliefs, events in the fictional world are readily accepted as more or less inevitable or necessary. The most important of these beliefs which steer impressions of objectivity is causality. Bordwell (1985a) makes the point that the story in classical cinema is characterized by causal links between events, the kind of links identified by research into prototypical causation. The role of ‘coincidence’, as in chance meetings, and that of deadlines, as in suspense scenes, is rarely, if ever, felt to be the result of intentional construction. And finally, the narrative as a whole, although only at times visible, lends a textual coherence to events, which at least softens discrepancies with the logic of everyday life: “the strange and deviant is brought within a discursive order and thus made to seem natural” (Culler, 1975: 137). Thus, the course of events in the fictional world obeys a logic of its own, and, like events in the real world, has some incomplete predictability.

Control of what the viewers see should be taken in a broad sense. Control is not restricted to their view, but extends to the viewers’ knowledge, at any given

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5 See, for instance, Schank’s conceptual dependency theory (Schank, 1975; Schank and Abelson, 1977).
6 For the narrative logic of traditional film, and the role of chance meetings and deadlines, see Bordwell (1985a,b).
moment, of the complete series of causally related events in the fictional world making up the film story. However, it can still be argued that the specific way in which a film manipulates the viewer's knowledge is through controlling views of the spatiotemporal fictional world. 7

A kind of pragmatic contract may be thought to underlie the control of what viewers see in the cinema. Generally speaking, the viewers have no say in the control the film exerts on what they see and when and how they see it. Film makers have a tremendous freedom in deciding for the viewers what they are to see. At the same time, they have to obey certain constraints, namely the accepted logic of storytelling by means of film. The contract ensures that, in the end, the viewers get what they want, although not always at the points at which it is expected. Perhaps it is most accurate to say that the viewer has willingly delegated control to the narration, expecting in return certain gains, such as being entertained. The structure of traditional film narration guarantees precisely that.

In traditional films, narration is such that at any moment during the showing, there is a promise of reward. Reward is linked to progress in knowledge, that is, understanding the story as a whole, especially kernel elements of its plot structure. (Who has done it? Why? Will they marry? Will the hero survive and beat the villain?). Outcomes favored by the viewer because of sympathies and antipathies, or particular views of the world (to be discussed later) are also rewarding.

Knowledge of the events in the fictional world is rewarding, as is knowledge of the artefact. The formal system of the film, like its story, unfolds only gradually. For example, a particular editing of two shots, or a given camera movement, may be beautiful in themselves, but enjoyable patterns of editing or camera movement, for example, develop in time. In other words, at any given time the artefact also holds numerous prospects of (further) reward, given the potential for completion of patterns.

Reward is not continuously given, nor is its quantity evenly distributed throughout the film as a whole. Reward is generally postponed, it is never given fully until the end of the film. However, a delicate balance between reward and non-reward is maintained throughout the whole film (cf. Kintsch, 1980, who maintains that interest in reading a story is determined by a balance of frustration and reward). Narrative procedures, such as temporary information gaps, suspense and surprise 8 are conventional ways to achieve this end (Bordwell, 1985a; see also Brewer and Lichtenstein, 1982). Temporary gaps or 'mysteries' may be frustrating but are also expected to be lifted by some non-trivial information. In suspense, a crucial outcome, involving the fate of a sympathetic protagonist, is withheld, while at the same time, the certainty that it is about to be communicated grows. Surprise can

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7 Here it is assumed that dialogue, as a major source of knowledge in the story world, is, like action in a narrower sense, accessed through 'views'. More generally, for our purposes, film viewing includes hearing.

8 It may not be immediately clear how surprise contributes to the promise of future reward. Surprise involves an unexpected outcome. One surprise may then arouse an awareness of additional unexpected outcomes.
be seen as frustrating – some revision of current knowledge being necessary – and, at the same time, rewarding – some new perspective or retrospect being opened. The emotion occurring when reward (in the sense just mentioned) is present, is enjoyment. We can distinguish F-enjoyment and A-enjoyment. F-enjoyment results from gains in knowledge of the fictional world and in progress towards preferred outcomes, especially those concerning the protagonist's ultimate fate. A-enjoyment is the response to closure of patterns in the artefact.

Enjoyment due to reward may be frequent, but interest due to the promise of a future reward in terms of knowledge and favored outcomes is permanent. Canonical narrative structure ensures promise. An introduction sets up expectations of complications, while complications point to a future solution. Apart from the enjoyment derived from what they learn or just see, the viewers are given a sense of the movement of events towards closure, a process accompanied by several rewards along the way, an ultimate satisfaction of curiosity and other concerns (to which we will turn later). As the narration proceeds, prospects for further reward improve gradually, intensifying affect, as the Law of change would predict. At any time, however, the viewers have already experienced much enjoyment, and look to an even more valuable gain later in the story.

Interest, then, is the basic emotion in film viewing. We can define interest as an inclination to spend attention on the film, to watch it intensely, and engage in active processing in response to promising prospects (Tan, in press). Interest is an anticipatory emotion, such as desire, hope and fear. In contrast to these last two emotions, which have specific events as their objects, the film as a whole is the target of interest.

Interest is both an A- and an F-emotion. The viewer appraises promise of knowledge of the final state of affairs in the fictional world, as well as of further development and completion of stylistic patterns and motives. The action tendency, an urge to watch, has both the fictional world and the film portraying it as its object.

Although it may fluctuate from one moment to another, typically, the intensity of interest is high throughout, until the final story arrives at its resolution. At any time, whatever the emotion the viewers experience, be it fear, pleasure, pity, excitement or disgust, they retain an urge to know what is going to happen next. The film experience can then be described as an ongoing emotion episode, starting at the moment when promise has reached some critical value, usually at an early stage, and ending when promise ceases to exist, that is at the end of the film, quite in line with the 'Law of closure'. Interest is the constant emotion throughout the episode, while other emotions are carried by interest and, at the same time, lend a specific colour or tone to the experience.

3.4. Observation and virtuality of action

The film's control over what the viewers see, and how and when they see it, effectively leads them into an elaborate fantasy from which there is little or no escape. The viewers are led to imagine themselves an invisible witness in the
fictional world. It is important to note that, despite the fact that the audience consists of many individuals, each viewer experiences the view of any scene offered by the camera as his or her own view. The point has been made by Sesonke (1973), among others. It appears that "... my relation to the space and events of the film is felt as my relation, not as ours. When the camera moves it is I and not we who move with it through the world of the film" (Sesonke, 1973: 408-409, italics his). The imagination entails one's presence in the fictional world as a limitlessly mobile, viewing head, severed from its extremities. Although the viewer is there, in no way does his or her presence affect any event. Traditional film style guarantees this very state of affairs. Traditional film systematically avoids addressing the witness directly. Although the action does not conspicuously avoid the space surrounding the camera, which is the imagined origin of one's view, an actor never looks right into the camera, and never does anybody on screen speak to the audience. 9

Traditional film narration generally affords the invisible witness a privileged view on events. 10 The film adopts a point in space that allows viewers to see what is relevant to understanding any story action, whether on the general or specific level or whether one or several loci of action occur within a scene. Those features of the situation that correspond to the components of meaning involved in specific emotions are subject to privileged viewing. Fear of the protagonist's immediate fate is aroused by focusing the view on details constituting a threat, for example the pointed gun.

Invisible witnesses are unable to act. Both invisibility and the lack of control over their gaze preclude any cause for action. The viewers' feat as witnesses coincides with their inactivity in the cinema, though they are not identical: lack of command in the fictional world is part of the guided fantasy that the film imposes on the viewers; sitting in a chair in the dark is not. The viewers, both as spectators of what happens on the screen, and as witnesses in the fictional world, are limited in what they are allowed to see. This tends to enhance the diegetic effect. More importantly, no one in the fictional world appeals to the viewers for action, either in terms of help or advice, and indeed that would clearly be pointless. At the same time, however, the kind of events witnessed would by all means justify altruistic responses and verbal intervention on the part of the viewers. The witnesses' situation is completely analogous to that of the observer in the real world, who is neither called upon to intervene nor physically able to react. Take the example of a witness watching a murder for a few seconds in the cabin of a train passing the one the observer is in, as in Murder She Said (1962). As a consequence, action tendencies of necessity assume the shape of virtual tendencies: "I would like to

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9 If there is something like direct address, it is by way of an instance readily recognizable as a medium, such as a 'narrator', in the classical movie represented by a voice-over.

10 In his discussion of the classical Hollywood cinema's mode of narration Bordwell quotes cameraman Lindsley Lane, who in a 1936 issue of the American Cinematographer states that the camera through the entire film imposes on the viewer the feeling "of being at the most advantageous point of perception" (Bordwell, 1985b: 161).
help you”, or “Someone should come to help”. The emotion of the witness essentially involves virtual action tendencies. Moreover, there is always a component of helplessness involved in appraisal of the situation.

It should be stressed that the fact that the witness position is only imagined does not alter the emotion. In the cinema, the viewers can do little but see themselves as invisible witnesses. My claim is that once this state of mind has been created, the situation elicits the same kind of emotion that would arise if the same situation were witnessed in reality, provided of course that the viewer were equally helpless. The viewer’s awareness of the imaginary nature of both the events and his/her position as a witness functions as a very minor means for controlling emotion. Viewers can always resort to the realization that it is only a film they are watching, but tend to do so only if fictional events threaten to result in an – ultimately – unpleasurable affect. A scene showing more violence than one can bear is a case in point. Withdrawal from the guided imagination is rare, because it is difficult, and because it will result in missed opportunities for enjoyment. Knowledge that withdrawal from the guided imagination is a feasible option, may merely function as a safety belt: it could actually help to lift inhibitions that would otherwise result from the operation of the ‘Law of care of consequence’. The viewers take greater ‘risks’, in terms of viewing and involvement, because they know that possible damage to a safety concern is limited in the end.

The inability to act, then, takes place on two levels. First, the invisible witness is exposed to the control the film exerts on views, giving rise to a desire for knowledge and interest. Second, while witnessing any particular scene, the witness is unable to intervene. Freedom of control demands a privileged view together with an inability or absence of necessity to act; they jointly give way to intense observation. The witness can do nothing, which makes it all the easier to watch. Intense observation has a target and a focus, let us call it an ‘attitude’. Again, it is the film that imposes a particular attitude on the viewer, or rather, the viewer as an imaginary witness. This is done by selection of views and arranging for salience of particular details, related to the intended situational meaning structure. Observational attitude can be aloof, or ‘partial’, sympathetic or hostile.

3.5. Observational attitudes and empathy

The view of the fictional world may foster emotions that have fictional events as their object. The viewers’ emotions are unmediated responses to events portrayed. Alternatively, the view may emphasize the significance of events to characters and the emotion felt by the character. In the latter case, emotion is empathic, because the viewers ‘relate to’ the character’s experience of the fictional world. An empathic emotion, then, is an emotion in the viewers that is stimulated by the construed significance of the situation to some fictional character. The protagonist’s appraisal of the situation is an important part of the significance of the fictional situation as perceived by the viewers. It should be noted that I refer to emotions as empathic regardless of whether the character’s emotions parallel those of the viewers; what matters is that the character’s understanding of the situation is
relevant for the viewers' emotion. Thus, pity is an empathic emotion, as is schadenfreude, where the viewers' feelings contrast with what is understood to be the character's (negative) appraisal of the situation. However, if the viewers were not aware of that appraisal they would not experience schadenfreude. This conception deviates from other proposals. Zillmann, many of whose views we share on this subject, regards only emotions that are hedonically compatible with those observed in the other as empathy (Zillmann, 1991: 40; this volume). Understanding of the significance of the situation is, in my view, crucial for empathic viewer emotion. It may even be that the character does not have an emotion, while at the same time the viewer has an empathic emotion. The neutrality of the character's state of mind, who is unaware of some threat, may raise pity in the viewer. The present definition allows us to distinguish empathy from sympathy. Although empathic emotion can be sympathy or its counterpart, antipathy, that is not necessarily always the case. We will come back to sympathy later.

Some evidence from research on story processing supports this conception of empathic emotion. First, readers seem to mentally represent emotional states of characters, including the emotional significance of the situation. Gernsbacher et al. (1992) showed that target sentences conflicting with the emotions implicitly attributed to the protagonist by the story were read slower than those consistent with the protagonist's implied emotions. If the valences of emotions implied by the story corresponded to the target sentence, differences in reading speed still occurred when readers encountered an unexpected difference in the nuance of the emotion, suggesting that readers form precise representations of characters' emotions. Second, it has been shown that readers represent information that is relevant to the protagonist's goals and actions, and infer it if it has not explicitly been given. Morrow et al. (1987, 1989) report several experiments demonstrating that spatial and object information relevant to the goals of a protagonist is focused upon and inferred. In addition, Morrow et al. (1987) showed that spatial information belonging to the character's mental location was more accessible than information about his physical location. The latter finding illustrates that subjects may represent the significance of the situation to the protagonist in addition to, or instead of, its significance from some external point of view.

Like the notion of 'perspective' in the theory of narrative, the concept of observational attitude may pertain both to the fictional world as a whole and elements of it, especially events and characters. Multiplicity of objects of observation implies multiple sources of enjoyment for the viewers. The viewers have ample room to develop an overall view of events or of the fictional world as a whole, and to relate it to their own views of the real world. For instance, the comedy conjures up an absurd world, the melodrama underscores a tragic view of life, action films and romantic films both make the viewers believe, if only for a moment, that the seemingly impossible may become true. Such cinematic views may apply to belief

\[11\] Cf. Frijda (1989) for the argument that aesthetic emotion may involve the work of art's capacity to demonstrate possibilities.
structures deeply rooted in the individual's personality and 'personal style' (Andrews, 1989; Messer and Winokur, 1986), and are to be considered as adaptive (Lazarus, 1991). The correspondence of the views offered by films with such personal 'weltanschauen' can be illustrated by some of the labels that Andrews (1989) proposed for those 'weltanschauen'. His labels correspond to the terms for major film genres: romantic, ironic, tragic and comic visions of life. 12 (Other labels include ordering, Darwinian, combative, and faithful visions of reality. It would be interesting to try to establish parallels with film genres.) The view of life presented by the film may parallel that of the viewers to some degree, or, alternatively challenge it, resulting in its bolstering or, less probably, its transformation. Other relations between the viewers' beliefs and the views presented in the film can be distinguished. In any case, the views offered are valued, because they serve personal adaptation. In satisfying a personal identity concern, or concerns for cognitive and affective learning, they result in enjoyment. In addition, anticipation of valuable views adds to the promise, which determines interest.

At another level of analysis, characters are the object of observation. The attitude towards characters deserves special mention, for it is the characters that are the driving force behind the story action. (See Bordwell's (1985a) account of causality in the classical mode of film narration.) The kind of attitude that a film can create towards the characters is, perhaps, best illustrated by a close look at our perceptions of other people in the reality of daily life.

In his study on understanding facial expression, Frijda (1956) distinguishes a number of attitudes of observation, the 'attitude vis-à-vis', the 'attitude en-profil' and the 'attitude en-face'. 13 For our purposes, we can extend the notion of attitude to involve a particular mode of observation not only of the face, but, more broadly, also of a character's behavior and expressions, in the situational context. What Frijda has termed the attitude vis-à-vis, a frontal observation, occurs when the observer is in direct interaction with the person observed. A form of direct address never evoked in traditional cinema, this attitude is completely incompatible with the concept of the viewers as invisible imaginary witnesses. Although similarly based on observation in the real world, the remaining two attitudes are not incompatible. The attitude en-profil involves observing the other's expression and behavior in order to find out what causes it. Film viewers try to construct the significance of the situation as perceived by the character, cued by the latter's expressions or other behavior as well as by their knowledge about the situational context. The character's concerns and emotions can then be understood. Traditional film generally affords this attitude, in showing character behavior in its context. Film stories are typically about goal-oriented protagonists, whose goal is to

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12 Obviously, there is no one single 'ironic' film genre. Irony pervades many genres. Skepsis, which is characteristic of the ironic vision of life, may be represented by the role of fate in the action genre. The protagonist's triumph is achieved not only as a result of calculation, but also by accident, coincidence and the antagonist's character flaws, often in spite of the protagonist's strivings.

13 In fact, a fourth attitude is distinguished, 'interpretation of expression'. Here expression is observed in complete separation of context. This attitude, then, is irrelevant to narrative film.
achieve a desired state in the outside world. Hence, we never see the protagonist acting *in vacuo*.

Various degrees of emphasis can be laid on context. In some genres, the act of observing events as a spectacle in themselves – almost separate from the characters involved in those events and their significance to them – is a major attraction, which is specific to the medium. Spectacle films, such as Science Fiction, the Spartacus type, the (natural) disaster film and fantastic films, like the *Lawnmower Man* (1992), are cases in point. In addition, films featuring dancing and singing, such as musicals as well as horror and erotic movies also count as examples. The emotions elicited by any events as a spectacle are witness emotions. However, they are essentially non-empathic. When viewing a horror movie, my fear may not be so much of the protagonist’s fate as of witnessing the repelling scenes. And in an erotic film, I do not have to sympathize with the protagonist’s desires in order to enjoy watching explicit sex. Shots showing hideous disfigurations in close-up are a major source of enjoyment in the horror movie, while images of isolated private parts are major enjoyments afforded by the latter. If any understanding of situational meaning as appraised by the protagonists is at all required, it need only be superficial. The concerns satisfied must be curiosity and sensation. Moreover, the lack of a threat to the concern for safety plays a significant role. The viewers do not have to feel guilty for watching private scenes, nor do they need to fear for a more permanent threat of repelling or terrifying views. Other genres emphasize empathic emotion at the cost of non-empathic emotion. Psychological dramas, in particular, such as Bergman’s *Scenes from a Marriage* (1974), as well as such melodramas as *Brief Encounter* (1945) evoke few non-empathetic emotions. Comedy is interesting, in that it evokes a mixture of empathic emotions, such as pity, ‘schadenfreude’ and vicarious embarrassment and humiliation, yet offers viewers the enjoyment of observing the characters and events from a distance.

Generally, focus on contextual events in combination with some access to a character’s highly limited appraisal of the situation creates dramatic ironies that constitute the popular cinema’s power of entertainment. The protagonist’s awareness of the total significance of the situation may be poor, in an absolute sense and in relation to the audience’s knowledge. Durgnat (1967) aptly notes that “Many a film is built on the crescendo of an original surprise, on a series of patterns like the inversion of a musical phrase in a symphony. The bitter bit, sudden reversals of fortune, sins coming home to rest, getting more than you bargained for, being beaten at your own game, losing what you love too much – all these and many other dramatic ironies or ‘reversals of expectation’ form the substructure of most tales” (Durgnat, 1967: 182–183). Fate is stronger than the protagonist’s capacity to control the events confronting him or her, a fact of which he or she is unaware. Irony may already be seen operative, not only in the story as a whole, but also on the more detailed levels of analysis. In many slapstick movies, the simplest actions of the protagonist fail because, as it seems, the world of lifeless objects has united against him. If he achieves his goal, it is a combination of errors or coincidences which have led to his success. Tati’s Monsieur Hulot, without knowing, is completely dependent in most situations upon a succession or accumulation of coincid-
ences. Buster Keaton survives an assault by a collapsing building only because he accidentally treads on a spot where a large open window hits the ground. And in *The Cameraman* (1928) Buster finally gains his beloved only because a pet monkey filmed him rescuing the girl. That he never laughs is, in part, due to his ignorance of the situation, while we laugh because we are aware of it and of his ignorance. In another genre, the protagonist has the same knowledge of the significance of the situation that the viewers share, and it is the antagonist who is unaware of the situation, as in *Some Like It Hot* (1959). Although popular films may resemble Durgnat's tales more strongly than a psychological novel, it is important to note that non-empathic emotions originating in the fictional world as a spectacle, are by no means limited to viewers of the most popular, 'sensational' genres. Consider, for instance, the strange characters in Fellini's films, or the mysterious locales in Tarkovsky's films *Solaris* (1972), *Stalker* (1979) and *Nostalgia* (1983). Another such example is the sight of the dining company in Buñuel's *Charme Discret de la Bourgeoisie* (1972). They may evoke feelings of surprise, wonder and perhaps amazement in the most sophisticated viewer, but would undoubtedly be enjoyed without any consideration of any character's state of mind. Typically, empathic and non-empathic emotions are mixed harmoniously. For instance, a major outcome of the action in terms of the protagonist's goals, resulting in sympathetic enjoyment, can at the same time serve as a spectacular highlight. The hyperbolic destruction of the evil scientist's lab by the end of an action thriller is a simple example. The two types of emotion may also alternate systematically. For instance, a romantic scene, stirring up sympathetic emotion, may be preceded by an introduction showing a panorama of the landscape in which the scene is to take place, resulting in quiet contemplation.

What Frijda (1956) calls the *attitude en-face* is also typically invoked by traditional film. This attitude involves attentive observation of the other's behavior for its own sake. Melodramas, in particular, focus extensively on the character's reaction to events. The cause of the behavior is already known to the viewer and a prolonged view of the character's reaction enables the viewer to imagine the character's feelings 'from inside', in other words, to empathize with the character. The almost emblematic example is the character receiving and reading a letter containing bad news, as the viewer already knows. (This means that the viewer already has some elaborate knowledge of the character's concerns.) The frame progressively narrows, for instance by means of a dolly-in in the direction of the actor, catching the face looking up from the letter after reading in close-up. As a contrast, consider a typical event reaction pair in comedy, where the attitude en-face is weak, closely approximating the attitude en-profil. The protagonist approaches a door on which, as the viewer knows, a bucket filled with water or

14 This does not apply exclusively to melodrama. In the canonical structure of stories, events can be divided into the event, in a narrower sense, and a (mental) reaction to it (e.g. Rumelhart, 1977). Most classical films conform to the canonical story schema (Bordwell, 1985a). In addition, narrative film has been said to be the most melodramatic among narrative forms, for the very reason that much attention is devoted to showing emotional reactions.
some more repellent fluid has been placed. The viewer needs to know only one element of the significance of the situation to the character, namely that he suspects nothing. The event which is, of course, stylistically stressed as the moment suprême, is characteristically followed by only a short look at the character, usually showing an exaggerated expression of unpleasant surprise, that needs only a fraction of a second to be grasped.  

The attitude en-face prompts or even compels viewers to code the significance of a situation, taking account of the protagonist’s feelings and assessing in detail the impact of the situation in the light of the protagonist’s concerns. It gives rise to empathic emotion, emotion in which the subject has a more or less elaborate understanding of the significance of the situation to the other, and can imagine the other’s emotion. Although empathic emotion can be invoked by the attitude en-profil, the attitude en-face is more effective in this respect.

3.6. Sympathy and identification

Most, though not all, empathic emotions are sympathetic, that is, they depend on a basic sympathy concern. As social animals, people care for others, especially when the other is an acquaintance of some degree. In traditional cinema, characters are perceived as human beings. Sympathy can be given to them at low cost, in comparison to the reality of daily life. Caring for family members or friends takes time and energy and in many cases commitment is long-term. In the cinema, the witness role implies that no overt action is required and any efforts will terminate within a couple of hours. Sympathetic emotion results in part from a particular view of the world, a friendly one, and from a particular observational attitude, the attitude-en-face.

Sympathy, pity, admiration, hope and fear are the major empathic emotions. Sympathy as a feeling for film characters is possibly triggered by a combination of various factors. Although not systematically researched, some commonly mentioned stimuli for sympathy are (1) pursuing goals related to the just cause, (2) physical attractiveness, and (3) some minor shortcomings making the character not too godlike and more human. In addition to these, the canonical film story may induce sympathy because it is inherent to it that the protagonist meets obstacles on the way to his or her goal.

Sympathy involves a virtual tendency to be near the character, to express support for the character’s goals, to share things, to give something to him or her and receive something in return. Furthermore, the witness position may elicit a desire to see the character. When viewers sympathize with characters they perceive them as attractive equals. Pity is characterized by an urge to protect the character perceived as weaker than oneself. Admiration is a perception of the character as stronger than oneself. Admiration gives rise to a virtual tendency to be near that

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15 An alternative is a contradiction of the expected reaction. In the Buster Keaton kind of comedy, the protagonist seems perfectly unaffected by what has happened.
character, and a desire to receive attention, obtain or borrow something from him or her. Hopes and fears are anticipatory sympathetic emotions. The situation is characterized by a lack of control and a promise or an impending threat to a character's well-being. The virtual action tendency is a desire to see the character do the right thing and witness his or her subsequent success. Hopes and fears, as anticipatory emotions, may be regarded as investments, the strength of which depends on sympathy. There are other, more complex, sympathetic viewer emotions, such as vicarious shame, guilt and envy. As Frijda (1993) demonstrates, the appraisal process of these emotions in their non-vicarious forms may, in itself, be fairly complex. An extensive discussion of these emotions is, however, beyond the scope of this article.

Sympathy is balanced by antipathy. Generally, the sympathetic protagonist meets resistance by a disliked antagonist. In a way, however, antipathy is derived from sympathy. In traditional film, the protagonist is the main agent driving the events, and the antagonist exists by virtue of the protagonist. This does not mean that the antagonist is necessarily passive or only reactive. On the contrary, usually the 'bad guy' outsmarts the protagonist by surprise once in a while. However, the focus of the narration is on the protagonist's concerns, goals, plans and feelings. The viewers' dislike of the antagonist results from his or her intention to harm the protagonist, and determines the intensity of their sympathy for the protagonist. More generally, characters other than the protagonist may be the object of empathic emotion. In that case, the viewer's emotional response is determined by the significance of the event as apparently perceived by the character involved. For instance, viewers can experience empathic anger when watching a character intentionally inflict pain on a protagonist. Alternatively, empathic gratitude is the result of seeing a character save the protagonist out of free will.

Finally, the attitude en-profil, but more especially the attitude en-face may incidentally result in identification. Identification occurs when the viewers imagine 'what it is like to be the protagonist'. Identification in a literal sense is characterized by the viewers' experience of the very same emotion that the character is imagined to have. That statement is, of course, subject to discussion. Obviously, the viewers know that they are not the character; rather, they experience an illusion, but are not under a delusion. (See also Zillmann's contribution to this special issue.) The significance of the situation can be appraised by the viewers as though it were seen from the protagonist's perspective. This is not incompatible with the invisible witness position and a common ingredient of empathy, as we have seen. The viewers' presumed sharing of concerns is the difficult part of the identification concept. For viewers to share completely the concerns of the

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16 A demonstration of a shift in perceived strength of a character resulting in a reversal of dominance of emotional response, from pity to admiration, can be found in Van den Boom and Tan (1992).

17 An experiment by Albritton and Gerrig (1991) illustrates actual functioning of what they call 'participatory responses'. Subjects were made to prefer positive or negative outcomes of a story. It was found that preference responses assumed to be made during reading, interfered with verification of the outcome that had previously been presented.
character in his or her situation, would mean that they do not understand or imagine those concerns, but have them – an obviously impossible situation. Incomplete sharing of concerns makes it doubtful whether the viewers can have emotions similar to the imaginary ones of the character. Since no emotion can occur at all without concerns being touched upon by the situation, as the ‘Law of concern’ states, I cannot have my emotion without my concerns being involved. Therefore, we can, at best, assume that it is possible for viewers to imagine actually having a concern, which in turn results in an experience that parallels the character’s ‘emotion’ as closely as possible. The viewer is greatly helped in this respect by the fact that traditional film portrays concerns that are readily recognizable. In addition, sympathetic emotion, especially sympathy in a narrower sense, admiration and pity, involve a tendency to share intimate feelings with the protagonist to the point of losing part of one’s identity.

As stated, identification occurs only incidentally, because the observational attitudes of traditional film do not systematically reveal the significance of a situation to viewers from the vantage point of a character. For instance, it has frequently been observed that so-called subjective views of a scene are never totally subjective (e.g. Metz, 1981). That is, views on events as some protagonist sees them, deviate slightly from the latter’s point of view, sustaining the illusion of the invisible witness, who is allowed to see what the character sees from a position as close to the latter’s as possible, but never coinciding with it. Robert Montgomery’s Lady in the Lake (1947) has become famous for its failure to draw the viewer into complete identification, for the very reason that it attempts to portray events more or less completely from the protagonist’s point. All one can say in favor of some literal kind of identification is that the attitude en-face, especially the sustained close-up of a face, invites viewers to imagine how it would feel to be that character. And of course, individual viewers may have a certain propensity and preference for identification, regardless of whether the film compels viewers to identify with the characters. All in all, it seems doubtful whether there is any use at all for the concept of identification in describing film viewing and concomitant emotion, given the ideas of empathic and non-empathic witness emotion.

I would like to make a few remarks on attitudes of observation before closing my discussion of this subject. Observational attitudes cannot be distinguished in any absolute sense. This is not only a matter of definition; in practice, films may produce rapid shifts of attitude, and also allow for mixtures of attitudes, perhaps depending on genre. The attitudes en-profil and en-face must be distinguished in order to fit with well-known specific cinematic devices. Very probably, more attitudes than the two mentioned can be distinguished. Ideally, it might be possible to give an account of cinematic style in terms of attitudes of observation, accounting for genre differences.

I have described viewers’ emotions, both non-empathic and empathic, as resulting from a particular mode of observation, imposed on the viewer by the film. The description of the modes of observation is necessarily rough and tentative. It is meant to provide a starting point for further theory and research. Many questions remain to be answered. Can existing concepts of point of view from film theory and
literary theories of narration fruitfully be integrated with the psychological concept of observational attitude? Can we develop viewer measures that distinguish one observation attitude from another? Is it possible to predict observation attitudes from analysis of a particular film? My suggestions so far point to the need of thorough exploration of the nature of observational attitudes and their implications.

4. Beyond the diegetic effect

The diegetic effect, then, can be characterized as a set of embedded illusions. Both the illusion of space and the awareness of being in it depend on the illusion of movement. Taken as a whole, it creates a state of imagination: the viewers are led to imagine themselves as invisible witnesses moving around in the fictional world, and assuming vantage points dictated by the film. As such, they are shown events according to the significance they have to the characters, or to what they mean in terms of some particular view of the world. Thus, the diegetic effect as conceived of here, results from a layered construction. First, there is a more or less realistic representation of some fictional world. In the theory of literature it has traditionally been called 'mimesis'. (See Oatley’s contribution to this Special Issue.) Second, mimesis has an overall expressive tendency that surpasses representation. It portrays events and characters in such a way as to evoke a meaningful view of the fictional world, that may or may not carry a potential for generalization to the real world. However, further expressive tendencies of mimesis in traditional cinema are limited. Artistic expression, to say nothing of personal expression, is at best covert. As Bordwell (1985a) observes, artistic motivation of style is subordinate to realistic and generic motivation. And revealing marks of 'authorship' in traditional cinema is essentially an analytic enterprise, not engaged in by the normal viewer. To make this claim more concrete, it is instructive to compare the diegetic effect in traditional cinema with mimesis in literature, as accounted for by Oatley (this Special Issue).

In contemporary film theory, mimesis is a function of film narration. My starting point for the comparison will also be a number of well-documented characteristics of narration in the classical Hollywood cinema, as described in David Bordwell’s standard work (1985a,b). Oatley proposes to conceive of mimesis as a simulation of goal-oriented activity in the reader. Core elements of mimesis, according to Oatley, entail: (1) plot; (2) an imagined world; (3) speech acts by the narrational instance to the reader; and (4) constructive integration of disparate elements. First, plot in traditional cinema is rather straightforward; it can be winding, as Durgnat observed, but never crooked (Bordwell, 1985b: 41). Progress of story action seems determined by a natural causality, ultimately originating in the intentions of a human-like character, possessing traits that can sufficiently explain wants and desires. Narration is reluctant to show itself in ways other than the highly conventionalized intervention, limited to certain phases (e.g. exposition and epilogue) and stylized procedures (e.g. montage sequence, delimitation of scenes).
Second, the imagined world, with its sensory immediateness and its naturalized conventions, is consequently prominent in the viewers' experience. Moreover, the diegetic effect implies a mental model of the situation in which the viewer's self is represented. Third, it would be hard to find an equivalent of speech acts in traditional film narration, due to its transparency. If something like an act by some narrational instance were to be identified, it would probably be something like discrete and unambiguous showing. This is not to say that traditional film is incapable of telling us anything beyond the action represented. However, when it does, its 'speech' is indirect. A view of the world can be distilled from ironies in the plot, or from the way characters look at it. It may also simply emerge somehow from the particular attitude imposed on the invisible witness. And fourth, the viewer is to engage actively in constructive activity. Generally, activity assumes the shape of schema-based understanding (Bordwell, 1985a). Perhaps one can say that the cognitive model of a traditional film story as a whole consists entirely of readily available schemata, full instantiation of which is temporarily upheld by the narration. The same applies to film story 'existents', such as actions, characters and locales, as well as to thematically deeper-level structures, such as the film's view of life. The need for the viewers to engage in the construction of more complex and ambiguous meaning structures is practically absent. Thus, an existential view of life, suggesting that each individual chooses, to some degree, his or her identity, is more characteristic of the art cinema of the sixties than of more traditional genres. The traditional film viewer can be completely immersed in the activity; the complexity of this activity closely matching what a common film viewer can do. This makes for the experience of 'flow': task requirements balance capacities exactly. Although the viewer meets minor and major obstacles on the way to completion, these serve to keep cognitive interest at an optimal level. Arduous accommodation of schemata is an extreme exception. The emotional difficulty in following the film often stems not from any mind-boggling puzzle presented by the plot, but rather from the burden of the partly negative affects, resulting from witnessing the protagonist's misfortunes in the complicated stage of the story. The viewer lacks any means to engage in deep computation of possible future moves and countermoves. Foresight is generally limited to what is to be expected in the near future of the ongoing action. Even in complicated mystery films the viewers have only limited opportunities to actively solve the problem. Instead of trying too hard, the viewers' curiosity focuses on finding out when and how the detective will solve the mystery for them. 18

In short, the viewer's activity in traditional cinema may differ considerably from that of the literary reader. That is, if we limit the comparison to the reader of 'high literature'. For the present purpose only, let me define 'high literature' as the set of texts that necessarily evokes a literary attitude in the reader. According to

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18 Playing adventure games on the computer makes abundantly clear how lazy the film viewer is. In such games the player cannot move further into the plot unless he or she has solved the protagonist's current problem. The novice is struck by the effort it takes to actively hypothesize all possible ways out.
Zwaan, the attitude involves a readiness to construct the goals of the narrator and the point of the text, which are not self-evident. As a result, there may be a stronger focus on surface decoding (Zwaan, 1992). Due to frequent ambiguities and idiosyncracies, processing at other levels, such as the thematic, and that of interaction between the reader and author, is also considerably more intricate than is the case in reading, say, conventional stories. Texts invoking the attitude may show high levels of foregrounding (Van Peer, 1986), a literary device resulting in heightened awareness of the artefact. It seems, then, that high literature presents the reader with high complexity, and that understanding the texts at hand requires considerable problem solving, and manipulating elements of the artefact. In contrast, traditional cinema hardly ever requires viewers to engage in this kind of problem solving. Its style is largely bound by its subordination to the diegetic effect. At the surface level of encoding, establishing coherence is made easy. As already noted, discontinuities are limited, perhaps to gaps that can be bridged using readily available schematic maps (Hochberg, 1986). Generic conventions put further constraints on the author's freedom. Idiosyncratic excess, then, is negligible quantity.

However, it is not only the medium, but also the genre that dictates the differences. The art cinema confronts viewers with problems comparable to those of the reader of high literature. It has been suggested that here, declarative schemas no longer suffice, and that the viewer must engage in problem solving, helped by certain procedural schemas (Bordwell, 1985a). For example, narration can be highly self-conscious and ambiguous. According to Bordwell (1985a) the plot may be complex, containing 'permanent gaps', the diegetic effect may be less complete by uncertainty about perspective, continuity may be disrupted, and the viewer may occasionally be disoriented in time and space. Traditional film viewing may be more comparable to reading bestsellers that have been written according to regular generic schemes, and whose construction evades awareness.

The emotions experienced by viewers of traditional cinema are relatively uniform across different subjects. Again, as compared to the literary reader and the viewer of non-traditional film, F-emotion will dominate A-emotion, affective interest will be stronger than cognitive interest, and prototypical ('basic') emotions, such as sadness and fear, will dominate subtle mixtures. Moreover, the viewer will

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19 Some evidence has begun to accumulate as to the psychological validity of so-called classical editing rules (Reisz and Millar, 1968), ensuring minimum disorientation following discrete cuts. Frith and Robson (1975) have shown that sequences of pictures representing a simple action that respect directional continuity, are better remembered than sequences violating continuity. D'Ydewalle and Vanderbeeken (1990) have shown that violation of the rules leads to prolonged eye movement activity. Schröder (1990) reports shorter latencies in detecting non-classical cuts than classical ones. It may be that in traditional film making, processing effort in establishing coherence is kept below an upper bound of disorientation and above a threshold of visual boredom. With shot complexity kept constant, visual interest, or 'momentum' can be maintained by shot changes at some minimum rate (Spotiswoode, 1935; Hochberg and Brooks, 1978).

20 Research on viewers has confirmed this proposition. See for example Philippot (1993). Additional studies are discussed in Tan (in press).
entertain more emotional anticipations, such as desires, hopes and fears, while curiosity prompted by open-ended questions and serenity in retrospective reflection and understanding will be less characteristic of the response.

5. Conclusion

Appraisal in film viewing can be seen as based on a set of illusions that are difficult to resist. Once the viewers have decided to address what is on screen, they become inevitably caught in the diegetic effect. Control is necessarily handed over to the film, and the narrative structure is such that some promise of further reward is always kept alive, sustaining interest that is only to wane once the final event takes place, thus bringing the story to a satisfactory closure. The inability to act fosters intensified observation, which arouses emotions in the viewers. All F-emotion, emotion that has the fictional world as its object, can be understood as the emotion of witnesses.

The precise nature of witnesses' emotions depends on the fictional events presented and on the particular observation attitudes imposed on the viewers by the film. The viewer is led to invest sympathies and antipathies into the well-being of characters, or to observe events as a mere spectacle, strengthening interest and giving rise to empathic and non-empathic emotion.

Events may be relevant to the viewer because they appeal to a concern for sensation, or diversity, such as scenes that are rare or impossible in real life. However important such a concern may be, generally, traditional cinema events borrow their relevance to the viewers primarily from their significance to the protagonist. The viewers imagine that they are witnessing a fellow human being. Thus, sympathy may be the first concern touched upon by traditional film. The film as an artefact is awarded much less significance in awareness, as this would destroy the illusions responsible for the emotions. The role of the artefact as an emotional stimulus is limited to occasional and genre-dependent contributions to the film experience.

Apart from the fact that it is difficult for the viewers to escape the illusion of witnessing events in the fictional world, two other factors explain the typically high intensity of emotion in the cinema. One is a certain willingness on the part of the viewers to cooperate, as was mentioned earlier. The other has to do with self-amplification inherent in film-produced emotion. An appropriate coding of the film stimulus, that is, one in line with the controlled invisible witness illusions, does not, by itself, require much effort. Only some willingness on the part of the viewers is required to sit back, watch, and let their imagination be controlled. Coding may be almost automatic, given the high degree of perfection traditional film has reached in attaining its illusory and near-illusory effects. This does not mean that the viewers are passive. On the contrary, they may act as 'good viewers' and cooperate, so to speak to take full advantage of the illusion. Thus, they may try to discover possible continuations of the action, and imagine the feelings of protagonists where the observation attitude prompts them to do so. Active participation is
rewarding, because it increases returns. Anticipatory emotion may be stronger, and cognitive and affective closure may promise and yield more reward. This in turn raises interest level and its concomitant tendency to further involvement.

And finally, emotional meaning in traditional film may often be self-enhancing, because any emotion is accompanied by interest. For instance, once fear has been aroused, say by the sight of a shark fin amidst a crowd standing in the sea, as in *Jaws* (1975), the viewer is driven by an emotional tendency to keep watching this source of threat, regardless of whether it is shown or not. Caught in fascination, the viewer, as a witness of fictional events, is increasingly aware of the significance of a situation. However, emotion is, in part, nothing but the experience of some specific meaning of the situation, as emphasized by functional theory. It can be said, therefore, that in film viewing, emotions tend to feed themselves.

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Filmography

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Brief Encounter (D. Lean, GB, 1945)
Le Charme Discret de la Bourgeoisie (L. Buñuel, France, 1972)
Jaws (S. Spielberg, USA, 1975)
The Lady in the Lake (R. Montgomery, USA, 1947)
The Lawnmower Man (B. Leonard, USA, 1992)
Murder, She Said. (J. Pollock, GB, 1962)
Nostalgia (A. Tarkovsky, Italy, 1983)
Scenes from a Marriage (Scener ur Äktenskap). (I. Bergman, Sweden, 1974).
Solaris (A. Tarkovsky, USSR, 1972)
Some Like It Hot (B. Wilder, USA, 1959).
Stalker (A. Tarkovsky, USSR, 1979)