NARRATION IN SLOW CINEMA

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Zusammenfassung

Das britische Filmmagazin *Sight& Sound* hat die Bewegung des *slow cinema* als die wichtigste Entwicklung im ersten Jahrzehnt des 21. Jahrhunderts ausgemacht. Unbeachtet der Diskussion, ob die Langsamkeit im Film tatsächlich nur ein Phänomen des dritten Jahrtausends ist, stellt sich diese Dissertation die Aufgabe, narrative Strukturen solcher Filme und derer Effekte, die sie auf die Zuschauer haben könnten, zu untersuchen. In dieser Hinsicht wird die Herangehensweise an den Film hier aus rein funktionalistischen Gesichtspunkten betrachtet. Das heißt, es geht hier nicht um eine hermeneutische Interpretation, bei der semiotische, psychoanalytische, kultursoziologische u.a. Modelle verwendet werden, sondern um die Untersuchung der narrativen Strukturen und derer Funktionsweise. Obwohl das *slow cinema* meist als ein antinarratives Phänomen gesehen wird, versucht diese Arbeit zu beweisen, dass auch diese Filme auf denselben narrativen Strukturen basieren wie das konventionelle Kino.

Den Ausgangspunkt dieser Arbeit bildet die Analyse der Aktstrukturen von sechs ausgewählten Filmbeispielen. Um diese Aufgabe zu bewältigen, werden Ansätze aus der kognitiven Pragmatik – die Relevanztheorie von Dan Sperber und Deirdre Wilson (1987) – und aus der post-klassischen Erzähltheorie (David Bordwell, Kristin Thompson, Marie–Laure Ryan, David Herman) herangezogen. Da die Relevanztheorie die Bedeutung der inferentiellen Kommunikation betont, auf der auch die Filmkommunikation beruht, ist dieser Ansatz für meine Analyse besonders gut geeignet. Inferentielle Kommunikation besagt, dass die Bedeutungszuweisung einer Äußerung nicht als Dekodierung eines vom Sender festgelegten Codes abläuft, sondern durch den Empfänger, vom Kontext ausgehend, durch Deutung und Interpretation vollzogen wird.

Die Hauptaussage der Relevanztheorie ist, dass jede Äußerung im Rezipienten Erwartungen weckt und dass die Suche nach der optimalen Relevanz der Aussage zu den Hauptaufgaben der menschlichen Kognition gehört. Die allerwichtigste Unterscheidung, die die Relevanztheorie vorgibt, und die für diese Arbeit von maßgebender Bedeutung ist, ist die Differenz zwischen starken und schwachen Implikaturen, da diese eine geteilte Verantwortung für die mögliche Interpretation einer Aussage zwischen dem Autoren und dem Rezipienten beinhaltet. Im Fall von starker Kommunikation werden die Effekte, die eine Aussage beim Leser hervorrufen sollte, von Autoren vorkalkuliert. Im Fall der schwachen Kommunikation sind für diese hauptsächlich Leser (Zuschauer) verantwortlich. Die Dissertation versucht zu beweisen, dass der langsame Film eine Art der schwachen Kommunikation darstellt. Ferner kann mit solchen Konzepten der Erzähltheorie wie Erzählbarkeit (als ein qualitatives Merkmal für ein narratives Ereignis) und die Narrativität (als ein qualitatives Merkmal für die Organisation des Plots) der narrative Aufbau im langsamen Film bestens analysiert werden. Diese Dissertation weist nach, dass die *slow narration*-Filme anhand sowohl der Erzählbarkeit als auch der Narrativität klassifiziert werden können und dass beide Begriffe in unterschiedlicher Stärke auftreten können.

Die Dissertation zeigt dies anhand von sechs ausgesuchten Beispielen, die zwischen 2002 und 2011 produziert wurden und aus unterschiedlichen Filmkulturen und Kulturkreisen stammen (Taiwan, Argentinien, Deutschland, Ungarn, Thailand, Portugal). Da kausale Verknüpfungen in langsamen Filmen sehr lose bleiben, stellt diese Dissertation die These auf, dass eine Interpretation, die all die Elemente des Films in eine kohärente hermeneutische Auslegung zusammenfasst, nur *ein* möglicher Weg für den Zuschauer ist, um zu einer angemessenen Rezeptionsstrategie des Films zu gelangen. Andere Strategien, die hier vorgeschlagen werden umfassen affektive, emotionale und sinnliche Erfahrungen, die ein Filmerlebnis miteinschließt. Diese bilden jedoch ein methodologisches Problem für einen Wissenschaftler, der sich auf eine Strukturanalyse beschränken will, weil auch innerhalb der Zielgruppe des *slow cinema*, welche aus Anhängern des Autorenfilms besteht, höchst individuelle Reaktionen auf diese Filme zu beobachten sind, die sich der universell geltenden wissenschaftlichen Beschreibung entziehen können.

Abstract

Slow cinema has been identified by the British film magazine *Sight& Sound* as the most important trend that emerged during the first decade of the 21st century. Without pondering whether the tendency to slowness in the cinema is just a phenomenon of the third millennium, the linchpin of my thesis is the narrative structures of such films and the effects they may yield on the viewer's experience of a particular cinematic artwork. Thus my account of understanding narrative is a purely functionalist one. It entails that in the present study no hermeneutic approach is to be found that would further generate semiotic, psychoanalytical, culture sociological interpretations, inter alia. Another direction is taken, which starts by fleshing out the narrational structures and their functions. Despite the fact that slow cinema is usually regarded as an anti-narrative, this thesis demonstrates that also films associated with this stylistic trend display the same narrative structures as the mainstream cinema.

The point of departure is the analysis of the act structure of the chosen case examples. For carrying out this task the accounts from cognitive pragmatics – the Relevance theory as developed by Dan Sperber and Deirdre Wilson (1987) – and concepts from post-classical narratology (David Bordwell, Kristin Thompson, Marie-Laure Ryan, David Herman) were consulted. As the Relevance theory underlines the inferential nature of communication, it is best suited for analyzing film communication that is also regarded as an inferential elaboration. It implies that the meaning of the utterance, instead of being encoded by the sender and consequently decoded by the receiver, is inferred by recognizing the intentions of the communicator taking into account the contextual factors.

The basic assumption of the Relevance theory is that every utterance raises expectations in the audience and thus the search for relevance belongs to the basic tasks of human cognition. The most important division for this endeavour is the differentiation between strong and weak implicatures, identifying a shared responsibility for the interpretation of the utterance between the author and the reader. Whereas the effects of strong communication are foreseen by the speaker, the reader himself is mostly responsible for the effects generated by weak implicatures. The claim developed in this thesis is that the slow cinema is dominated by weak communication. In terms of narrative theory the communication design of slow cinema can be best analyzed along the lines of such concepts as tellability as a qualitative feature for a narrative event per se, and narrativity as a qualitative property of plot organization. The assumption followed throughout the thesis is that both of these concepts can be of varying degrees. Therefore, this thesis takes the form of a series of case studies drawn from all over the world, coming from different cinema traditions and culture areas. The six case studies include films from Taiwan, Argentina, Germany, Hungary, Thailand and Portugal and were produced between 2002 and 2011.

As the cause-and-effect chain remains very loose in slow cinema, a particular contention expressed in my thesis is that the extraction of coherence among the different elements of the film in the form of an interpretation is just one of the solutions for viewers in how to assess relevance in these challenging films. Other strategies suggested include affective, emotional and sensorial experiences that, however, pose a methodological problem for a scholar, because even within a group of cinema-educated viewers who form the main target audience of slow cinema, these reactions are highly individual and thus elude a universally-valid scientific description.

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II. Case Studies

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I. Introduction

1. Approaching the subject

"A philosophical inquiry entails at least two elements:
the identification of the problem and
the choice of concepts that are adequate for approaching it."
Gilles Deleuze
Quoted in Giorgio Agamben's *The Signature of All Things: On Method,* New York, 2009, p. 76

1.1 Slow cinema - defining the bone of contention

In order to identify the problem, which will be the focal point of the study, let's refer to the British film magazine *Sight & Sound*. In a *Sight & Sound* discussion about the most distinctive features in cinema within the first decade of the 21st century, slow cinema was named as the most prominent phenomenon. Film critic Jonathan Romney mentions austere minimalism as one of its characteristics, and further defines it as follows:

> a certain rarefied intensity in the artistic gaze, whether the images are highly polished (Carlos Reygados *Silent Light*, 2007) or frugally rough-edged (the films of Lisandro Alonso) (...) The cinema that downplays the event in favour of the mood, evocativeness and an intensified sense of temporality. Such films highlight the viewing process itself as a real-time experience in which, ideally, you become acutely aware of every minute, every second spent watching.[1]

Romney names such filmmakers as Bela Tarr, Tsai Ming-Liang, Apichatpong Weerasethakul, Bruno Dumont, Fred Kelemen, Pedro Costa and Albert Serra as representative of slow cinema. Other filmmakers mentioned in connection with slow cinema are Gus van Sant, Paz Encina, Abbas Kiarostami and Sharunas Bartas.[2]

Film critics and bloggers talk about the phenomenon of slow cinema as one of the most impressive movements in the cinema of the first decade of the 21st century[3], at least since 2008. According to Matthew Flanagan, the term "cinema of slowness" was coined by Michel Ciment in 2003.[4] The term was subsequently mentioned now and then, but found wider acceptance through a pair of articles on slow cinema published in *Sight and Sound* in 2010.

The definition by *Sight & Sound* above mentions the main narrative strategy of such films -

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1 Jonathan Romney *In Search of Lost Time* in *Sight & Sound*, February 2010, p.43.

2 Matthew Flanagan *Towards an Aesthetic of Slow in Contemporary Cinema* in 16:9, 29, 2008, available at http://www.16-9.dk/2008-11/side11_inenglish.htm (Accessed May 2010).

3 Jonathan Romney *In Search of Lost Time* in *Sight & Sound*, February 2010, p.43.

4 Matthew Flanagan *Towards an Aesthetic of Slow in Contemporary Cinema* in 16:9, 29, 2008, available at http://www.16-9.dk/2008-11/side11_inenglish.htm (Accessed May 2010).

the downplaying of an event and the highlighting of the film as an artefact through emphasis on the visual qualities of an image. Romney also noted the tight bond between the viewing process of slow cinema and the real-time experience of the audience.

The *Sight & Sound* statement launched a huge discussion in the online blogging community, mainly concerning which filmmakers should be included on the slow cinema list[5] and how to assess the fetishization of the long take, which is obvious in such films. But the discussion also highlights several other issues. The most interesting were brought up by the American cultural critic Steven Shaviro in his response to the article.[6] Shaviro opines that in comparison to Michelangelo Antonioni, Chantal Ackerman or other filmmakers of the 1960s and 1970s, who can be regarded as the predecessors of slow cinema, a kind of provocativeness is missing in contemporary examples. There is no longer a sense of pushing boundaries. His second theory is that contemplative cinema (as he calls it), with long-take, long-shot, slow-camera-movement and sparse-dialogue, has become a cliché, as a kind of international default style for film festivals.[7] He accuses it of being nostalgic and regressive, and his argument is worth quoting here at length:

> It´s a way of simulating older cinematic styles, and giving them a new appearance of life (or more precisely, a new zombified life-in-death), as a way of flattering classicist cinephiles, and of simply ignoring everything that has happened, socially, politically, and technologically, in the last 30 years. […] it is a profound failure of imagination to continue to make films in the old way, or that continue to signify in the old way, when this `old way` has itself become nothing more than a nostalgic cliché. […] you simply retreat into fantasies of the good old days. To my mind, this is what Slow Cinema is doing.[8]

After this affront on slow cinema Steven Shaviro lists his favourite contemplative films. His position can be subsumed under the premise that the most original examples are those that depart from the norm of slow cinema.

This discussion clearly shows that the term *slow* (or contemplative) on the one hand does not

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5 More blogposts about this issue: Steven Shaviro Slow Cinema vs. Fast Films in Steven Shaviro The Pinocchio Theory, 12.05.2010, http://www.shaviro.com/Blog/?p=891, (accessed 23.03.2011); a contribution to the discussion by The Guardian film critic Danny Leigh The View: Is It OK to Be a Film Philistine?, 21.05.2010, The Guardian, available at http://www.guardian.co.uk/film/filmblog/2010/may/21/film-philistine, (accessed 23.03.2011); a blogpost by Glenn Kenny About Nothing, Or New Fast, 13.05.2010 available at http://somecamerunning.typepad.com/some_came_running/2010/05/new-fast.html , (accessed 23.03.2011); a blogpost by Harry Tuttle Slow Films, Easy Life, 12.05.2010, available at http://unspokencinema.blogspot.com/2010/05/slow-films-easy-life-sight.html (accessed 23.03.2011); a blogpost by Vadim Rizov Slow Cinema Backlash, 12.05.2010, available at http://www.ifc.com/blogs/indie-eye/2010/05/slow-cinema-backlash.php , (accessed 23.03.2011).

6 There were also arguments about the sensibility of a film critic in understanding the greatness of slow films, peaking in almost offensive allegations, concerning the use of the term *philistine*. As this issue says nothing about the films in question, no further attention will be paid to it.

7 Steven Shaviro *Slow Cinema vs. Fast Films* in Steven Shaviro *The Pinocchio Theory*, 12.05.201, available at http://www.shaviro.com/Blog/?p=891. (Accessed 23.03.2011).

8 Ibid.

exhaust the problem; it is far more complex and needs to be approached in a refined manner. Issues such as the question of image politics, the structure of the film industry (film festivals and their stereotypical managing patterns), questions of taste and critical consciousness all seem to play a role here.

On the other hand, the discussion in the blogosphere echoed another more general problem. The biggest debates in the comments sections centred on the filmmakers and films on the list, with posters seemingly offended that their beloved slow cinema filmmaker is not mentioned. Reading the criteria for slow cinema for the first time with only a few filmmakers in mind – the austere minimalism, mood, intensified sense of temporality and extensive use of the long take - seems to be enough to define a new direction. But the inclusion of more and more filmmakers on the slow cinema list obscures more than it illuminates. No wonder then, that there is some doubt if such a style or current as slow cinema (or contemplative cinema) exists at all. There are plenty of opinions stating that the directors named in connection with slow cinema are too diverse in their artistic approaches to be named in the same sentence.

As slow cinema has garnered such enthusiasm, it cannot be said that the phenomenon is non-existent. On the contrary, these discussions disclose another feature of slow cinema – as a catchy concept. The proof is the ease with which the concept has attracted the attention of film critics as well as film aficionados. This showing of the power of the word is reminiscent of an old Latvian tale: a long time ago lakes flew high above the Earth. If one was spotted and its name uttered out loud, that particular lake would drift down and settled on that spot of the Earth forever. All phenomena in film history – different New Waves or styles – are also brought out of oblivion when named by film critics. If similar patterns are found – either stylistic or narrative, appearing in a series of films during a certain period of time – then a new direction is declared. But as it is one of the main activities of critical endeavour, as Noél Carroll has eloquently argued in his book *On Criticism*[9], there is no point in hostility towards the declaration of this particular movement. Even more, as Jonathan Crary has pointed out, historical periodizations as such are always historiographical constructions. What is at stake here is not so much their eligibility as their fruitfulness for our understanding of historical developments.[10]

And so, the first fruit of stating such a stylistic development as slow cinema exists is that it helps to grasp the landscape of contemporary cinema. Namely, the discussion in *Sight & Sound* explains the rise of slow cinema with the decline of commercial Hollywood cinema, which during the last decade has delivered predictable stories and stereotypical characters.[11] It is underchallenging and boring for film critics, and in contrast the quirky stories of slow cinema catch their attention.

A point concerning the use of ideas expressed online and not in printed form has to be made.

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9 Noél Carroll On Criticism, London, 2009, p. 45.

10 Quoted in Frank Kessler *The Cinema of Attractions as Dispositif* in Wanda Strauven (ed.) *The Cinema of Attractions Reloaded*, Amsterdam, 2007, p. 58.

11 Jonathan Romney *In Search of Lost Time* in *Sight & Sound*, February 2010, p. 44

Some academic critics with their highbrow attitudes might condemn the use of the opinions of non-academic persons as the pivot for further elaboration on the subject of slow cinema. But elitism is not in place here. Nowadays, when a lot of important academic critics have blogs and invite readers to comment, the gap between the sides seems to have diminished. Even more so because many commentators are well versed in cinema and offer well-founded reasons for their positions. Therefore, discussions about slow cinema on the Internet have to be taken into consideration.

In any case, what is at stake is not as Paul Feyerabend states: "The most important scientific thinking begins not with ideas, but with words that become appealing".[12] Because in terms of which was first, it is obvious that the notion of slow cinema showed itself first in films. And, as was already obvious in the disagreements on which 21st century filmmakers should be labelled as representative of slow cinema, the list itself is a problem. It gets even more complicated when looking for the predecessors of slow cinema. "Austere minimalism, mood and intensified sense of temporality" can also be attributed to other prominent filmmakers and periods in cinema history such as Italian Neorealism and European Modernism. As such, a magazine article requiring catchy proposals and concise opinions is perhaps not an appropriate forum for delivering a highly refined analysis of the phenomenon. However, analysing the possible displays of slowness throughout the history of film is also not the aim of this project. For this endeavour the definition of slow cinema, as formulated by *Sight and Sound*, is taken for granted, and the focus is on the narrative structures of these films and the functional dimensions.

To begin: a concise overview of the history of slow cinema as researched by British scholar Matthew Flanagan. Following that the phenomenon of slow cinema will be placed within a larger context in terms of the contemporary urge towards deceleration in every aspect of life.

1.2. **Genesis of Slow Cinema**

An overview of the genesis of slow cinema, this chapter's focus, was laid out by Matthew Flanagan in his doctoral thesis *'Slow Cinema': Temporality and Style in Contemporary Art and Experimental Film*.

His opinion is that:

> The label `slow cinema` refers to a model of art or experimental film that possesses a set of distinct characteristics: an emphasis upon extended duration (in both formal and thematic aspects), an audio-visual depiction of stillness and everydayness; the employment of the long take as a structural device; a slow or undramatic form of narration (if narrative is present at all); and a predominantly realist (or hyperrealist) mode or intent.[13]

12 Quoted in Robert B. Ray *How a Film Theory Got Lost and Other Mysteries in Cultural Studies*, Bloomington, 2001, p. 50.

13 Matthew Flanagan *'Slow Cinema': Temporality and Style in Contemporary Art and Experimental Film*, 2012, University of Exeter, p. 4, available at https://ore.exeter.ac.uk/repository/handle/10036/4432 (Accessed May 2013).

The characteristics he offers echo the opinion of Jonathan Romney from *Sight& Sound*, as quoted previously. However, if Romney understands the "slow cinema" current as having emerged during the first decade of the 21st century, then Flanagan regards this phenomenon as evidently broader. For Flanagan slow cinema is a style that can be traced across several decades and different cinematic currents. Hence, he states that even though an understanding of slowness in cinema as defined in his above quotation emerged after the Second World War this style acquired prominence during the last three decades. As predecessors of modern slow cinema he names Italian Neorealism and other phenomena of European cinema of the 1950s and1960s, and points to the high modernist, structural and materialist cinema of the 1960s and 1970s[14] as another source of influence. As Flanagan acknowledges, the tendency towards slowness in cinema deepened during the 1990s, and as proof he lists such influential films as *Sátántangó* (dir, Béla Tarr, 1994), *Vive l´amour* (dir. Tsai Ming-Liang, 1994) and *Frost* (dir, Fred Kelemen, 1997).[15]

If the evolution of slow cinema out of Italian Neorealism and other European cinematic movements seems to be evident, one of Flanagan´s achievements was to make the connection to North American experimental cinema. Flanagan notes the primacy of the image and the contemplative mode of spectatorship as the decisive factors which serve as bonds between contemporary slow cinema and its forerunners from North America.[16] But Flanagan also sees the demarcation line between art cinema and experimental cinema, both which have nourished contemporary slow cinema, as the difference in attitude towards the narrative. Whereas art cinema, which positions itself as counterpart to classical norms, still has "a coherent mode"[17] despite loosened causality, in experimental cinema narrativity represents just one option amongst others. Flanagan continues by stating that "Experimental cinema thus tends to alight upon singular events (in isolation, series or superimposition) rather than narratives, and its explicit function is to interrogate both the filmic apparatus and the spectator's perception of those events."[18]

Thus, post-war art cinema never eliminates narrativity completely.[19] But even more importantly for the contemporary style of slow cinema is the introduction of duration as the component of the moving image "far more aggressively, and in considerably greater surplus"[20] by North

14 Matthew Flanagan *'Slow Cinema': Temporality and Style in Contemporary Art and Experimental Film*, 2012, University of Exeter, p. 4, available at https://ore.exeter.ac.uk/repository/handle/10036/4432 (Accessed May 2013).

15 Ibid., p. 8.

16 Ibid., p. 40.

17 David Bordwell *Narration in Fiction Film*, 1985, p. 228.

18 Matthew Flanagan *'Slow Cinema': Temporality and Style in Contemporary Art and Experimental Film*, 2012, University of Exeter, p. 42, available at https://ore.exeter.ac.uk/repository/handle/10036/4432 (Accessed May 2013).

19 Ibid., p. 42.

20 Ibid., p. 43.

American experimental cinema than by art cinema of the same period - structural films being the most glaring examples. Flanagan underlines the fixed frame as a distinct characteristic of this film current that has been productive for contemporary slow cinema, enabling the observation of the scene and the extended duration.[21] The effect created through the linking of these two elements is that the visual image becomes a direct and unmediated representation of reality.[22] Flanagan regards the structural films of Andy Warhol, as they represent a hyperbolic approach to this observational strategy, of central influence to slow cinema.[23]

That there is a direct, traceable link between structural film and slow cinema, as the concept is herewith employed, is already exemplified in Flanagan's thesis. So, for example, in the chapter about the influence of Warhol´s film *Empire* (1964) on the following generations of filmmakers he quotes Apichatpong Weerasathakul,[24] who is among the prime examples for this present study. In quoting Apichatpong Flanagan claims that the feature of Warhol´s work that has most influenced contemporary slow cinema is his "sustained, contemplative attention to the registration of light and minor detail *over time*".[25] This observational practice yields a contemplative spectatorial practice.

However, as will be outlined in the chapters to come, there is more than one possibility of how to come to terms with slow cinema. Though all of these modes imply the spectator´s readiness for this "contemplative practice", it can only be regarded as an umbrella term for more varied approaches to these highly challenging films.

By appealing to contemplation and the conscious experience of the present moment, the slow cinema current fits into the overall tendency to praise deceleration in all spheres of life, not only in the arts. This trend towards slowness can be observed at least since the end of the 1980s, and the next subchapter will outline the common features all these numerous movements share.

1.3. **Everything slow: from slowness as a lifestyle to slow criticism**

Increasingly diverse slowness movements, as a reaction to acceleration dominating many aspects of daily life, can be observed during the last two decades. It is sometimes hard to fathom what all these slow-movements have in common.
This chapter will pursue the issue of slowness throughout different disciplines and different

21 Matthew Flanagan *'Slow Cinema': Temporality and Style in Contemporary Art and Experimental Film*, 2012, University of Exeter, p. 44, available at https://ore.exeter.ac.uk/repository/handle/10036/4432 (Accessed May 2013).

22 Ibid., p. 45.

23 Ibid., p. 48-49.

24 Ibid., p. 51.

25 Ibid., p. 50-51.

aspects of our lives. In doing so, I'll endeavour to avoid historical fallacy – the assumption that two events occurring at the same time are necessarily related to each other.[26]

First of all, *Sight and Sound* editor Nick James confesses frankly that the concept of slow cinema is borrowed from the Slow Food movement.[27]

The international Slow Food movement was founded in 1989 in Paris, although the first slow food organizations were established in Italy during the 1970s. The main principles of this movement are slowness, leisure, and healthy, pleasurable and regional food.[28]

The Slow Food movement in Italy started as a reaction to the opening of *McDonald's* restaurants in Italy in the mid-80s. Afterwards Carlo Petrini, the founder and president of the Slow Food movement, insisted that they never sought to battle *McDonalds* and fast-food, any slow-movement cannot be discussed without mentioning its counterpart – all things fast.

The German economist Fritz Reheis, in his book *Die Kreativität der Langsamkeit*, interprets facts from different domains as evidence for his thesis that our civilization is on the verge of a meltdown caused by acceleration. He detects this process, which began with the Industrial Revolution, on three levels: nature, culture (aka society) and individual persona.[29]

In order for society to escape the meltdown Reheis declares the concept of the ecology of time, meaning that each system – either nature, culture or each individual – has to find the time frame needed for different processes in order to prosper.[30] At any rate, it means slowing down the pace. In the case of economics it would mean that instead of generating more and more money, it would reproduce life – within nature and of any individual.[31]

Surprisingly, the German name for this deceleration – Entschleunigung – was used for the first time only in 1979 by psychologist Jürgen vom Scheidt in his book *Singles. Alleinsein als Chance des Lebens*. p. 98.[32] That we are all time sick was first pronounced by American physician Larry Dossey in 1982. "Time is getting away, that there isn't enough of it and that you must pedal faster and faster to keep up."[33] As Carl Honoré puts it, speed is not always the best policy.[34]

As acceleration affects us directly through e-mailing and other informational overload, there is not only a call for slower communications, but also guidebooks on how to slow the pace in our

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26 Donald Crafton *Foreword* in Angela Dalle Vacche (ed.) *The Visual Turn. Classical Film Theory and Art History*. New Brunswick, 2003, p. IX.

27 Nick James *Passive Aggressive*. In: *Sight& Sound*, April 2010, p. 5.

28 Carlo Petrini *Slow Food. Geniessen mit Verstand*, Zurich, 2001, p. 29.

29 Fritz Reheis *Die Kreativität der Langsamkeit. Neuer Wohlstand durch Entschleunigung*, Darmstadt, 1998.

30 Fritz Reheis *Die Kreativität der Langsamkeit. Neuer Wohlstand durch Entschleunigung*, Darmstadt, 1998, p. 140.

31 Fritz Reheis *Befreiung vom Turboprinzip. Die Diktatur des Geldes und die Perspektive einer Ökologie der Zeit* in Marcus Brüderlin (ed.) *Die Kunst der Entschleunigung. Bewegung und Ruhe in der Kunst von Caspar David Friedrich bis Ai Weiwei,* Ostfildern, 2011, p. 17.

32 Markus Brüderlin *Avantgarde der Entschleunigung. Bewegung und Ruhe in der Kunst der Moderne von Goethe über Caspar David Friedrich bis Ai Weiwei* in Marcus Brüderlin (ed.) *Die Kunst der Entschleunigung. Bewegung und Ruhe in der Kunst von Caspar David Friedrich bis Ai Weiwei*. Ostfildern, 2011, p. 61.

33 Carl Honoré *In Praise of Slowness: Challenging the Cult of Speed*, New York, 2005, p. 3.

34 Ibid., p. 4

daily lives[35], including slow gardening, slow family living, and even slow sex.[36] Such manuals also suggest to stop multitasking, and say "no" to events when it's getting to be too much. These are all strategies for gaining more time, lowering the stress level, and breaking the cult of speed. As Italian media theorist Franco Berardi puts it "[..] the technology is not the problem, but the combination of information and competition. We must again become masters of our time"[37]

Christian Geyer hightlights another extreme of this trend in *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*: "Entschleunigung ist zum Heilsversprechen einer alles zusammenrührenden Kulturkritik geworden."[38], and he suggests we should try to escape the tendency to view everything fast as evil. But there is also a dark side of slowness – it has already generated a huge market, so that slowness has turned into a commodity.[39]

An art exhibition at the Kunstmuseum Wolfsburg (Germany) entitled *Die Kunst der Entschleunigung* (*The Art of Deceleration*) broaches this issue in a more delicate manner. The authors of the exhibition maintain that in modern art one cannot think acceleration without deceleration. Therefore, in the realm of arts, viewing the tendencies as enemies is not fruitful. Parallel to motion there has always been calmness.[40] The German professor of cultural theory, Hartmut Böhme, expresses the same thesis – if we pit slowness against pace and handle it as a binary opposition, we will surely perpetrate error in reasoning.[41] Both modes of art have their eligibility, and only through that can we secure a diversity of forms.[42]

Sociologist Hartmut Rosa, a leading figure in German discussions about acceleration in our society, acknowledges art as having a very special place in the world. Namely, art is a forum where another experience of time is possible. Often art consciously decides to offer slowness

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35 For example, Christine Louise Hohlbaum *The Power of Slow. 101 Ways to save Time in Our 24/7 World,* New York, 2009.

36 For more on this subject see Carl Honoré *In Praise of Slowness: Challenging the Cult of Speed*, New York, 2005.

37 Quoted in Geert Lovink *Was uns wirklich krank macht* in *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*, 26.06.2010, available at http://www.faz.net/aktuell/feuilleton/debatten/digitales-denken/informationsueberflutung-was-uns-wirklich-krank-macht-1595689.html#Drucken (Accessed 04.05.2012)

38 Geyer, Christia *Beschleunigung ist nicht das Problem* in *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung* 11.01.2012 http://www.faz.net/aktuell/feuilleton/debatten/kritik-eines-heilsversprechens-beschleunigung-ist-nicht-das-problem-11600490.html (Accessed 07.06.2012)

39 Wolfgang Ullrich *Einmassierte Ideen. Die Befreiung des `slow painting` aus den Mechanismen antimodernistischen Denkens* in Markus Heinzelmann, Wolfgang Ullrich, Heinz Knobeloch (eds.) *Slow Paintings*, Nuremberg, 2009, p. 37.

40 Markus Brüderlin *Vorwort* in Marcus Brüderlin (ed.) *Die Kunst der Entschleunigung. Bewegung und Ruhe in der Kunst von Caspar David Friedrich bisAi Weiwei*. Ostfildern, 2011, p. 8.

41 Hartmut Böhme *Wollen wir in einem posthumanen Zeitalter leben? Geschwindigkeit und Verlangsamung in unserer Kultur* in Marcus Brüderlin (ed.) *Die Kunst der Entschleunigung. Bewegung und Ruhe in der Kunst von Caspar David Friedrich bis Ai Weiwei*, Ostfildern, 2011, p. 4.

42 Wolfgang Ullrich *Einmassierte Ideen. Die Befreiung des `slow painting` aus den Mechanismen antimodernistischen Denkens* in Markus Heinzelmann, Wolfgang Ullrich, Heinz Knobeloch (eds.) *Slow Paintings* 2009, p. 37.

and patience instead of speed and stimulation.[43]

Two decisive events in art history that took place parallel to each other illustrate this cohabitation. In 1909, the Futurist Manifesto was published in Paris. Its author, poet Filippo Tomasso Marinetti wrote:

> We declare that the splendor of the world has been enriched by a new beauty: the beauty of speed. A racing automobile with its bonnet adorned with great tubes like serpents with explosive breath ... a roaring motor car which seems to run on machine-gun fire, is more beautiful than the Victory of Samothrace.[44]

At the same point in time, Italian painter Giorgio de Chirico painted his *pittura metafisica*[45], containing references to the mythical world of classical antiquity. Marcus Brüderlin, the curator of the *Die Kunst der Entschleunigung* exhibition, puts de Chirico in context with classical modernism. In comparison to the dynamic paintings of the futurist movement, the paintings of de Chirico exude an atmosphere of emptiness. These paintings appear to be calm, but deep down they project a disquiet that seems to contain something threatening. De Chirico's art reflects a dream world full of suspense with all its fears and cravings.[46] Brüderlin connects de Chirico with the surrealists, and therefore – with classical modernism.

Since the 1950s there has been a tendency towards slow painting in the art world, but it is not a sustainable movement with manifestos. Slow painting takes on several forms. It can be a very labour-intensive application of colour (like in the paintings of Ad Reinhardt or Turner prize winner Tomma Abts). It can be a life-long project like those of On Kawara and Roman Opalka, where each painting is a part of a bigger system lasting throughout the life of an artist. Or, painting as a project whose sum parts are spread across different countries and deputed to many other painters (like in works of Jonathan Monk).[47]As one of the curators of the exhibition *Slow Paintings* in Museum Morsbroich rightly emphasizes, as slow painting highlights the performance-related aspect of this art form, it is quite close to conceptual art.[48]

In order to show a canonical confrontation between slow and fast painting, the action paintings

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43 Ute Ruhkamp, Marcus Brüderlin *Hechelnde Politiker, crashende Finanzmärkte, chaotisches Schwingen, Burn-out, ewiges Leben. Interview mit dem Soziologen Hartmut Rosa*, in Marcus Brüderlin (ed.) *Die Kunst der Entschleunigung. Bewegung und Ruhe in der Kunst von Caspar David Friedrich bis Ai Weiwei*, Ostfildern, 2011, p. 11.

44 Filippo Tomasso Marinetti *The Futurist Manifesto [1909], available at* http://cscs.umich.edu/~crshalizi/T4PM/futurist-manifesto.html (Accessed May 2012).

45 Markus Brüderlin *Avantgarde der Entschleunigung. Bewegung und Ruhe in der Kunst der Moderne von Goethe über Caspar David Friedrich bis Ai Weiwei* in Marcus Brüderlin (ed.) *Die Kunst der Entschleunigung. Bewegung und Ruhe in der Kunst von Caspar David Friedrich bis Ai Weiwei*, Ostfildern, 2011, p. 19-20.

46 Markus Brüderlin *Avantgarde der Entschleunigung. Bewegung und Ruhe in der Kunst der Moderne von Goethe über Caspar David Friedrich bis Ai Weiwei*, in Marcus Brüderlin (ed.) *Die Kunst der Entschleunigung. Bewegung und Ruhe in der Kunst von Caspar David Friedrich bis Ai Weiwei*, Ostfildern, 2011, p. 21.

47 Markus Heinzelmann *Vorwort* in Markus Heinzelmann, Wolfgang Ullrich, Heinz Knobeloch (eds.) *Slow Paintings*, Nuremberg, 2009, p. 7.

48 Ibid., p. 7.

of Jackson Pollack can be contrasted with those of Mark Rothko.[49]

Within film, Dana Linssen, editor-in-chief of Dutch independent film magazine *De Filmkrant*, launched the *Slow Criticism Project* in 2009. The *Slow Criticism Project* was envisioned as a counterbalance to the commodification of film criticism, which has become a marketing tool for film production companies[50] as of late. She states that it is no longer the film critic who sets the agenda, but the schedules of film festivals, the release dates of films, the ability of stars and the favours of publicists.[51] She wants to break this cycle by offering up the possibility of publishing articles in her magazine's *Slow Cinema* issue (published each year for the Rotterdam Film Festival). These article are like cries from the heart or, as she puts it, "wayward articles" with burning words that seldom find their way to print.[52]

In 2011, Dana Linssen summarizes *Slow Criticism* as follows:

> That kind of criticism is akin to improvisational music, it has a kind of immediacy and urgency, based on knowledge and skills, but always open to the radical otherness of what one might encounter along the way. That, indeed, is a moral responsibility. It is critical activism and politique des critiques.[53]

In short, it has to be an in-depth analysis of film instead of criticism dominated by "an inward-looking, worshipful fan-boy contingent more interested in finding even more obscure directors to deify."[54]

The question of slow criticism is inevitably connected to the films of slow cinema, as many of the films and authors discussed on the pages of the *Slow Criticism Project* belong to this movement. These films need time to evolve and therefore favour the long take. Whereas the subject of long take will be looked at in another chapter of the dissertation, the problem with slow criticism has to be addressed. Namely, as Dana Linssen asserts, if you as a critic dare to write about slow films you often have to start your criticism with an excuse[55], because watching these slow films takes up so much of the precious time in the viewer's life. Here we encounter the same understanding of time as the call for slowing down the pace; namely, the understanding of time as value and money (Benjamin Franklin). Dana Lassen correctly acknowledges though, that as cinema is a time-based art it's a strange paradox if only a fast

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49 Uta Ruhkamp *Von der Emotion zur Kontemplation. Das Museum als Ort der Entschleunigung*, in Marcus Brüderlin (ed.) *Die Kunst der Entschleunigung. Bewegung und Ruhe in der Kunst von Caspar David Friedrich bis Ai Weiwei*, Ostfildern, 2011, p. 15.

50 Dana Linssen *Introducing: Slow Criticism* in *Filmkrant*, 2009, available at http://www.filmkrant.nl/slowcriticism_2009 (Accessed 06.06.2012).

51 Ibid.

52 Ibid.

53 Dana Linssen *Out of the Comfort Zone* in *Filmkrant*, 2011, available at http://www.filmkrant.nl/slowcriticism_2011 (Accessed 06.06.2012).

54 Nick James *Passive aggressive* in *Sight and Sound*, April 2012, Vol. 20, Issue 4, p. 5.

55 Dana Linssen *Short Takes on Long Takes Criticism* in *Filmkrant*, 2009, available at http://www.filmkrant.nl/slowcriticism_2009/6798 (Accessed 06.06.2012).

film is a good film.[56] She believes that people want films to be overly fast in order to have more time to spend just living. Thus "Maybe we should say that film is a `time waste art`; maybe we should say that film is a `time pass art`."[57] But having more time left for other things does not mean that we have more spare time - this has been very persuasively argued by various prophets of slowness movements. Instead of investing all this spare time in doing nothing, we invest it in online communications, etc., thus perpetuating this circle of accelerated life speed. What connects all these different concepts and how do they differ? What unites most of these concepts is the idea of antagonism. There is a strong divide between slow and fast: slow food versus fast food, slow communication versus fast communication, slow criticism versus fast criticism, and so on. One notion is positive; the other is seen as antagonistic. Various authors call for a balance between the two sides of a problem that unites them. And almost all of the authors under consideration acknowledge the benefits of speed. But we've reached an edge, and that's why the call for deceleration is coming at precisely this moment in time.[58] Our obsession with speed has gone too far.

Looking at the common denominators that unite slow cinema with other slowness movements, a quotation by the founder of the Slow Food movement Carlo Petrini is in place. He states:

"Der wirkliche Unterschied zwischen verschiedenen Erfahrungen liegt nicht in deren Dauer, sondern darin, wie aufmerksam, wie achtsam und bewusst wir sie erleben."[59] In regards to slow painting, Wolfgang Ullrich also stresses the dimension of time: throughout the long process of creating a work of art, the importance of artistic intention diminishes. Instead, the time itself becomes prominent.[60]

Precisely this conscious perception of every minute spent in the cinema is the quality attested to slow cinema in the watershed article by Jonathan Romney in the February 2010 issue of *Sight and Sound* magazine: "Such films highlight the viewing process itself as a real-time experience in which, ideally, you become acutely aware of every minute, every second spent watching."[61] So to answer the question of why durational cinema popped up at precisely this point in time, slow cinema seemed to be a catchy concept as a clear alternative to Hollywood.[62]

The most important aspects of the concept of slow cinema, as with other slowness movements, are a craving for authenticity and emphasis on time. Both recently published dissertations

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56 Dana Linssen *Short Takes on Long Takes Criticism* in *Filmkrant*, 2009, available at http://www.filmkrant.nl/slowcriticism_2009/6798 (Accessed 06.06.2012).

57 Ibid.

58 Carl Honoré *In Praise of Slowness: Challenging the Cult of Speed*, New York, 2005, p. 4; Hartmut Rosa *Beschleunigung. Die Veränderung der Zeitstrukturen in der Moderne*, Frankfurt am Main, 2005, p. ? ; Reheis, Fritz *Die Kreativität der Langsamkeit. Neuer Wohlstand durch Entschleunigung*., Darmstadt, 1998, p.?.

59 Carlo Petrini *Slow Food. Geniessen mit Verstand*, Zurich, 2001, p. 50.

60 Wolfgang Ullrich *Einmassierte Ideen. Die Befreiung des `slow painting` aus den Mechanismen antimodernistischen Denkens* in Markus Heinzelmann, Wolfgang Ullrich, Heinz Knobeloch (eds.) *Slow Paintings* 2009, p. 37.

61 Jonathan Romney *In Search of Lost Time* in *Sight & Sound*, February 2010, p. 43.

62 Nick James *Passive Aggressive* in *Sight& Sound*, April 2010, Vol. 20, Issue 4, p. 5.

concerning slow cinema (although this phenomenon is not always named as such), are concerned with precisely these two aspects.[63] However, the approach to the problem taken herewith is in trying to model how the viewer makes sense of these unusual films. The following chapter will introduce the analytical models applied in these theses and explain the choice of case examples.

63 Matthew Flanagan *'Slow Cinema': Temporality and Style in Contemporary Art and Experimental Film*, University of Exeter, 2012, available at https://ore.exeter.ac.uk/repository/handle/10036/4432 (accessed May 2013), Tiago Magalhães de Luca *Realisms of the Senses. Tendency in Contemporary World Cinema*, University of Leeds, 2011, available at http://etheses.whiterose.ac.uk/1760/ (accessed May 2013).

2. Methodological Toolkit

2.1. Hypothesis

We make sense of the world in the form of narratives – it is "a fundamental way of organizing data" as Edward Branigan stated.[64] It is not surprising then, that since 1907 narrative film has been the dominant mode of filmmaking.[65] It seems to be a truism that each and every film is associated with a narrative. Taking this into account, it is then understandable that all descriptions of slow cinema underline the peculiar approach to narrative as one of the main features of this type of film.

In terms of narration in slow or durational cinema, film critic Jonathan Romney, who coined the term, mentions only one of its characteristic. He surmised that slow cinema minimizes the impact of an event favouring mood instead.[66] This vague definition calls for a more detailed one on the subject. Interestingly enough, the narrative mode of slow cinema is defined through the negation of it. Matthew Flanagan wonders in the first sentences of his thesis *'Slow Cinema': Temporality and Style in Contemporary Art and Experimental Film* whether there is a narrative at all.[67] Later on he states that the events in these films are "divorced from narrative relations".[68] Tiago Magalhães De Luca, who has written a doctoral thesis on a realistic tendency in contemporary art cinema, does not explicitly address slow cinema, but uses the same examples associated with this group of films. He agrees with Flanagan by saying that the narrative in the films cited in his research is blatantly averted.[69]

The position in this study is in agreement with Flanagan's thesis that:

> In slow films, when dramatic narrativity is ejected from image-sound situations, other aspects of the image tend to come forward to fill, or deepen, the void: *vision* (in the form of extended observation), the depiction of everydayness, and the production of duration.[70]

However, there is a difference in agreement pertaining to his statement that slow cinema is completely devoid of narrativity. The assumption is that this is just a sweeping generalization for the sake of convenience. Surprisingly, none of the scholars who have approached the issue of slow cinema have delivered an in-depth analysis of these quirky narratives. This issue is deserving of more attention, as the quotations cited above are hardly reflective of everything

64 Edward Branigan *Towards a Pragmatics of Narrative* in Jürgen Müller (ed.) *Towards a Pragmatics of the Audiovisual*. Vol. 2, Munster, 1995, p.17-54.
65 Edward Branigan *Narrative Comprehension and Film*. London, New York, 1992, p. xi
66 Jonathan Romney *In Search of Lost Time* in *Sight & Sound*, February 2010, p.43.
67 Matthew Flanagan *Slow Cinema': Temporality and Style in Contemporary Art and Experimental Film* , University of Exeter, 2012, p. 4, https://ore.exeter.ac.uk/repository/handle/10036/4432
68 Ibid., p. 9.
69 Tiago Magalhães De Luca *Realisms of the Senses. Tendency in Contemporary World Cinema*, University of Leeds, 2011, available at http://etheses.whiterose.ac.uk/1760/ (accessed May 2013).
70 Matthew Flanagan: *Slow Cinema': Temporality and Style in Contemporary Art and Experimental Film* , 2012, p.100, https://ore.exeter.ac.uk/repository/handle/1003 6/4432

surrounding these unusual plots. Although these films are not driven by the desire to present a cause-and-effect story, they still require a structure that from the outside bears no likeness to classical mainstream narratives. It is probable that the formal features of slow cinema, such as long takes and characters with no psychological motivation for their deeds, have distracted the scholars' attention away from the fact that narrative structures are present in slow cinema. Thus, the main purpose of this project is to scrutinize the plot organization of several examples of slow cinema, and in doing so overthrow the generalization that narrative construction is meaningless in this type of cinema. The hope is also to demonstrate that though we encounter structured narratives in contemporary durational cinema, in comparison to mainstream films, the degree of the tellability of an event and the narrativity of the plot have to be taken into account, as do particular cognitive procedures.

The spectator will thus become a point of reference due to the belief of the film viewing process as communication between the audience and the film. As will be later explained, it is not just the length of the shot and the atmosphere that defines slow cinema. More important is the pace of the narration as understood by the viewer, which is decisive for the phenomenon. The emphasis will be on films where the narration - from the viewer's point of view - develops slowly, and the devices for understanding the story are delivered with delay. This is mostly combined with scene resolutions dominated by long takes and shots. The consequence of such a narrative strategy is that the viewer is released from the automatism of reception predominant in standard Hollywood movies. The fact that the automatism of reception is eliminated in slow films is due to the artistic design of the film – as mentioned, long shots "where nothing happens" evoke different subjective reactions from the viewer. Thus, a further aim of this study is to model the theoretically different possibilities such "perverse" reception strategies of a film can evoke. However, in acknowledging the interpretation as the most common strategy not only for coming to grips with any film, but also as core to film studies, the intent in this project is not to take the approach of "business as usual." This thesis will instead attempt to suggest alternatives in approaching these narratives, taking the interpretation as a granted.

The concept of the viewer in mind is situated between the ideal reader and the experiences of actual spectators. Communication herein is considered a reciprocal process where the text (film in this case) evokes certain effects on the viewer. As the construction of the film leaves huge room for free association, the audience can develop several alternatives of how to deal with it. Thus, the viewer invests interpretations into the story the filmmakers did not foresee. The guiding line is that no matter which sort of cinema is under consideration, the viewer is always steered by the wish to understand the film, or at least to find a way how to cope with it. Or as Meir Sternberg states, a narrative always has to be seen in a "in a purposive light."[71]

71 Meir Sternberg Narrativity: From Objectivist to Functional Paradigm in Poetics Today, 31:3 (Fall 2010), p.638.

This project is a functional approach to the analysis of slow cinema, combining methods and concepts stemming mostly from post-classical narratology, cognitivism and cognitive pragmatics.

To begin: the argument that the cognitive processes which take place during the viewing of a slow film are the same as during a mainstream film. The difference is within the artworks' inner structures. But we apply the same cognitive schemata in order to understand the narrative, schemata being an "organized clusters of knowledge [that] guide our hypothesis making."[72] David Bordwell, in his *Sketch for a Psychology of Filmic Perception and Cognition*[73], introduces various kinds of schemata: prototypes (to identify individual members of a particular class[74]), templates (to identify patterns - in a film plot such a pattern would be the so-called "canonical story", which is a template for organizing causality and time within a story[75] - the four-act-schema by Kristin Thompson, which will be applied later on, is such a template), or procedural patterns (that imply all learned skills such as riding a bicycle[76]). For the comprehension process all three schemata are decisive.

As the slow cinema examples often possess different degrees of weak narrativity[77], their narrative design requires a comparably greater effort to understand them. Although cinema-educated viewers as a group are herein regarded as a natural audience for slow cinema, we have to acknowledge very individual responses to every work of slow cinema and to every event (if a representation on the screen can be considered as such) in the film, even within this particular group. Working on this thesis within a European perspective on slow cinema, the natural audience for slow cinema considered here is shaped by the cinema and other experiences within this particular cultural, historical and social framework.

The starting point is the plot construction of the film, because it is the basis of any film analysis. David Bordwell has argued that there are four types of narration that yield correspondent viewing practices: next to the classical Hollywood mode are modes for arthouse cinema, historic-materialistic and parametric narration. The introduction to the three modes germane to this study will be discussed in due course; however, at this point the theory put forth by Staiger is important in that:

> (…) every period of history (and likely every place) witness several modes of cinematic address, several modes of exhibition, and several modes of reception. Moreover, any individual viewer may engage *even within the same theatregoing experience* in these various modes of reception.[78]

72 David Bordwell: *Narration in the Fiction Film*. 1985, p. 31.
73 Ibid., p. 30-40.
74 Ibid., p. 34.
75 David Bordwell: *Narration in the Fiction Film*. 1985, p. 34-35.
76 Ibid., p. 36.
77 For the definition of this concept see Chapter 2.2.
78 Janet Staiger *Perverse Spectators: The Practices of Film Reception*, New York, 2000, p. 21.

The proposition here is that in the case of slow cinema there are also several possible modes of how viewers seek to make sense of the onscreen images, and these modes can even function concurrently. Thus, the tentative claim is that in slow cinema the "perverse" strategies for dealing with films – effects that deviate from the effects the filmmakers might have calculated during the making process - turn out to be the most common tactics.

This study does not pursue the path traditionally taken by film scholars which entails generating thematic interpretations of film, but rather goes in another direction, whereby the structural features of the films are first fleshed out. This entails an elaboration on the act scheme of a particular plot, taking into regard its narrative construction. It is a critical commonplace that the work of art is designed in order to generate particular reactions from the audience. It will be one of the issues of the present thesis to discuss how far these effects can be calculated by the producer. Thus, the second step will suggest different strategies that could be utilized by the viewer in order to come to terms with these challenging slow films. The enthusiasm for interpretation is just one of the options Bordwell has at hand, and this study claims that in the case of slow cinema it is not always the most productive one. Many of the directors working within this current also stress this in their interviews. The claim here is underlined by the persuasion that an interpretation seeks to find coherence between all the elements of the artwork. As will be demonstrated throughout the project, this is often not possible in slow cinema. Even more, it was also not the aim of the filmmaker to justify the inclusion of this or that element into the film. Thus, the importance of interpretation is greatly diminished or becomes totally redundant, making room for alternative strategies such as emotional involvement without a narrative anchor, bodily immersion, or simply the relishing of the image and the present moment.

However, it must be noted here that in most cases in this study the use of the word "interpretation" is meant as an umbrella-term for all the possible cognitive reactions the audience can have.

Apart from the narrative analysis to which the biggest part of this dissertation is dedicated, the concluding chapter takes another view on slow cinema - from the perspective of a statistical style analysis. Although it is not a traditional method that a viewer uses during a film screening, this approach, if added to the functional perspective on the film comprehension described throughout this project, sheds a new light on slow cinema. Namely, in all the descriptions of this cinematic movement the importance of the long take has been stressed, which has been seen as a proof for the claim that the notion of slow/durational/contemplative cinema is akin to parametricity. Whereas in the analysis of the films *The Turin Horse* and *Fallen* in the second part of this thesis the issue is approached on the grounds of narrative theory, the closing chapter will pursue the interaction between the case examples and their relationship to parametricity from the point of view of statistics.

An overview of the theoretical approaches used in this project to model these different modes and the explanation about the film examples chosen is offered in the next subchapters. Before embarking on this endeavour I just want to clarify that throughout my study the notions *reader, viewer, audience, spectator, recipient* will be used interchangeably although I am aware that in different contexts the meaning of these concepts can differ considerably.[79]

2.2. Point of departure

The point of departure in this study is the four-act structure of narrative developed by Kristin Thompson. She argues that Hollywood mainstream productions consist of four parts (the Setup, the Complicating Action, the Development and the Climax) and an epilogue. She specified her opinion in a 2008 blog entry, emphasizing that it's not the four acts that are decisive, but the idea that each film can be divided into parts with the same average length, roughly 25 to 35 minutes. [80] This means that a three hour film has six parts and so on, which leads her to conclude that "the action should optimally run for at most about half an hour without some really major change occurring."[81]

The first goal of this thesis is to prove whether the narrative construction of slow cinema also bows to this law of thirty minutes, because the filmic time allotted to a director has to be structured somehow. For this endeavour Thompson's approach turns out to be best suited as a starting point for this project, because in her study she focuses her attention on the purely structural elements of the plot, without pondering the aspects of plot interpretation. The elaboration on solely the narrative segments lies at heart of this thesis.

However, the most important difference between slow cinema and its Hollywood counterpart is that the turning points in these types of films often turn out to be double-dealers, meaning that the paths laid out by these turning points often lead to nothing. In terms of this criterion slow cinema corresponds to the art-house cinema narration.

This study's position is that classical narrative theory is insufficient for the detection of narrative segments in slow cinema. Concepts deemed appropriate for such a task come firstly from post-narratology, and secondly from cognitive pragmatics. These two perspectives combined help to grasp the unusual works of slow cinema. This study will argue that the narrative parts in these films do not always have the same length range, although we still encounter similar narrative structures. But as the narrativity is a scalar category, the quality of a particular event (its tellability/point – concepts which will be explained later on) is gradable; it has direct consequences for the narrative segmentation of the story. For the different degrees of events, the context and its relevance to the further development of the story is crucial. Both these

79 For further reading on this subject see Janet Staiger *Media Reception Studies*, New York, 2005, p. 3.
80 Kristin Thompson *Times go by turns* in *Observations on Film Art*, June 21, 2008, available at http://www.davidbordwell.net/blog/2008/06/21/times-go-by-turns/ (Accessed 28.07.2012).
81 Ibid.

aspects condition each other so that the acts in a slow film can also become a relative category – there are films in which the acts are clear cut, but there are also films wherein the acts are hardly discernible. The fact that the act structure loses its prominence means that the cause and effect chain has been slackened. Hence, we have to rethink whether certain slow cinema examples still possess narrative, or whether they are already just a description or a catalogue.[82] During the course of the analysis the issue of the minimal condition of narrative will be reconsidered.

All in all, some structure can be found in any film, even if it is a quirky slow film. However, if we follow David Bordwell who convincingly argues that both the narrative structure and the process of narration are designed to fulfil a certain function[83], then what differentiates the slow cinema structures from the perceptible acts of mainstream Hollywood productions is their function. In case of the latter, it is how the viewer identifies with the characters onscreen, whereas in case of the slow cinema a permanent detachment from the story comes into being. Oddly enough, although viewers remain uninvolved with the events in these films, they are immersed in the environment as such. De Luca rightly observes a new tendency towards sensuality and materiality in slow films, but he overlooks the narrative structures that enable them. Thus this dissertation forms a 'missing link' between the films and De Luca´s observations, and even more so lays out the argument that in slow cinema different approaches are possible for the viewer to make sense of the film.

A supportive explanation for this view is the so-called Protheus principle, which Meir Sternberg formulated in 1982 stating that "in different contexts [..] the same form may fulfil different functions and different forms the same function".[84] This principle acknowledges that every work of art may invite several disparate interpretations, not just one, as it is often the case in traditional narratology.[85]

2.3. Degrees of narrativity and definition of narrative

As observed by René Audet, the terms narrative, narrativeness etc., have experienced an explosion in terminology over the last decades. [86] To give a detailed overview of the thicket of all theoretical positions concerning this issue would go beyond the scope of this research, thus the wish is to point to the aspects that can contribute fruitfully to the analysis of slow cinema.

82 For more on relationship between narrative, description and catalogue see Seymour Chatman *Coming to Terms: The Rhetoric of Narrative in Fiction and Film*, Ithaca, 1990.
83 David Bordwell *Neo-Structuralist Narratology and the Functions of Filmic Storytelling* in Marie-Laure Ryan (ed.) *Narrative Across Media. The Languages of Storytelling*, Lincoln, 2004, p. 207.
84 Meir Sternberg *Proteus in Quotation-Land: Mimesis and the Forms of Reported Discourse* in *Poetics Today*, Vol. 3, No. 2 (Spring, 1982), p. 148.
85 Bruno Zerweck *Der* Cognitive Turn *in der Erzähltheorie: Kognitive und `Natürliche` Narratologie* in Ansgar Nünning, Vera Nünning (eds.) *Neue Ansätze in der Erzähltheorie*, Trier, 2002, p. 223.
86 René Audet *Narrativity*: *Away from story, close to eventness* in René Audet, Claude Romano, Laurence Dreyfus, Carl Therrien, Hugues Marchal *Narrativity: How visual arts, cinema and literature are telling the world today*, Paris, 2007, p. 9.

In any case, the first issues that merit closer consideration are the different approaches to narrative in post-classical narratology. A point of reference for most of these mind-sets is the assumption that the meaning of a text is a cognitive construct, or mental image concluded by the reader (or viewer in this case) in response to the artwork.[87] The meaning is therefore not just predetermined by the author but instead, in order to comprehend the text, independence is granted to the interpretative capacity of the receiver. It does, however, occur within limitations that will be specified later on.

The most useful framework for the analysis of the chosen examples has been laid out by Marie-Laure Ryan in several articles concerning novel forms of narrative in the contemporary media environment. She makes a decisive point by drawing a distinction between "being a narrative" and "possessing narrativity.[88] The first can be attributed to "any semiotic object produced with the intent of evoking a narrative script in the mind of the audience."[89] The second notion describes the ability to trigger such a script.[90] Life itself, for example, can have narrativity, but it cannot cause narrative in a literal sense.[91] Put differently, the degree of narrativity concerns both the story itself and the discourse.[92]

According to Ryan, the classic case of narrativity takes place when "the text is both intended as narrative and possesses sufficient narrativity to be constructed as such."[93] This scalar concept of narrativity makes the rigid binary notion of narrative redundant, and this study strongly adheres to the position that in order to most suitably acknowledge contemporary artworks, we cannot proceed by strictly dividing narratives and non-narratives. Instead, a more refined approach is needed.

Literary scholar Brian McHale, in analysing avant-garde poetry, suggests the notion of weak narrativity. As it will be one of the tools in this analysis, the definition given by McHale is worth quoting at length:

> Weak narrativity involves, precisely, telling stories `poorly`, distractedly, with much irrelevance and indeterminacy, in such a way as to evoke narrative coherence while at the same time withholding commitment to it and undermining confidence in it: in short, having one's cake and eating it too."[94]

His definition reads as if it was developed with slow cinema in mind.

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87 Marie-Laure Ryan *Introduction* in Marie-Laure Ryan (ed.) *Narrative across media: the languages of storytelling*, Lincoln, 2004, p.8.
88 Ibid., p. 9.
89 Ibid., p. 9.
90 Ibid., p. 9.
91 Marie-Laure Ryan *Introduction* in Marie-Laure Ryan (ed.) *Narrative across media: the languages of storytelling*, Lincoln, 2004, p.9.
92 Marie-Laure Ryan *Avatars of Story*, Minneapolis, 2009, p.232.
93 Marie-Laure Ryan *Introduction* in Marie-Laure Ryan (ed.) *Narrative across media: the languages of storytelling*., Lincoln, 2004, p. 9.
94 Brian McHale *Weak Narrativity: The Case of Avant-Garde Poetry* in *Narrative*, Vol. 9, Nr.2, 2001, p. 165.

Also, weak narrativity presupposes a scalar concept of narrativity. This means that the issue of the minimum conditions of narrative/narrativity has to be broached, as several reactions to slow cinema suggest that these are prominent examples situated on the border between narrativity, weak as it may be, and non-narrativity. Therefore, a definition of narrative is needed.

For this purpose, Marie-Laure Ryan uses the definition of narrative derived from the one proposed by H.Porter Abbott and states that narrative is the presentation or representation of an event or a series of events.[95] The most controversial aspect in this definition concerns the nature of events in narrative, and the question whether the relationship between two or more events in a story has to be characterized with change of state. The most common definition of narrative that presupposes a general equilibrium which is at first disturbed, then restored at the end, entails precisely this. Therefore, the inclination is to think that in case of slow cinema the concepts of eventness and eventfulness are more useful.

2.4. Event, eventness and eventfulness

The first concept of eventness, as he named it, was developed by René Audet, who proposes to take the event as the atomic structure of a narrative instead of action. However, as the notion was developed from a phenomenological perspective[96] it is not useful for the purposes of this study, but his suggestion to define an event as "each act which could have an effect on things unfolding."[97], is. As Audet suggests later on in his classification of events, this definition entails not only an "inword event" which concerns the story-world, but also a discursive event and an operal event – "connected to the performing of the work itself".[98] All three modes of events can trigger narrativity.

A more detailed and elaborate definition is offered by Wolf Schmid. He sticks to the traditional concept of an event as it is used in literal theory, and demands that a true event has to have an aspect of exceptionality that distinguishes it from everyday routine.[99] Schmid lists further basic requirements for an event. He mentions that an event has to be regarded as real within the framework of an artwork - it has to possess resultativity. Furthermore, Schmid adds five more features to a change of state in order for anything to be regarded as an event. These features then control the level of eventfulness in each change of state. These are: relevance, unpredictability, persistence, irreversibility and non-iterativity.[100] Each of these categories

95 Marie-Laure Ryan *On the theoretical Foundations of Transmedial Narratology* in Jan Christoph Meister (ed.) *Narratology beyond Literary Criticism. Mediality, Disciplinarity*, Berlin, New York, 2005, p.4.
96 René Audet *Narrativity: Away from story, close to eventness* in René Audet, Claude Romano, Laurence Dreyfus, Carl Therrien, Hugues Marchal *Narrativity: How visual arts, cinema and literature are telling the world today*, Paris, 2007, p. 10.
97 Ibid., p.28.
98 Ibid., p. 33.
99 Wolf Schmid *Narrativity and Eventfulness* in Tom Kindt, Hans-Harald Müller (eds.) *What Is Narratology? Questions and Answers Regarding the Status of a Theory*, Berlin, 2003, p. 24.
100 Wolf Schmid *Narrativity and Eventfulness* in Tom Kindt, Hans-Harald Müller (eds.) *What Is Narratology? Questions and Answers Regarding the Status of a Theory*, Berlin, 2003, p. 24-29.

can be further gradational. This study will argue, however, that in some cases of slow cinema narratives the concepts of relevance, unpredictability, persistence, irreversibility and non-iterativity, useful for the analysis of classical narratives, lose their importance. It is the reference to them, although through denial, that fosters an awareness of the characteristic features of slow narrative. An analysis of the chosen example will be more explanatory, but at this stage just one aspect of non-iterativity should be highlighted. Namely, Schmid acknowledges that text, which contains iteration, approaches the mode of description.[101] For the analysis of slow cinema the tension between a story, a description and cataloguing will be of great importance.

At the end of his essay Schmid addresses the issue of interpretation and the interpretative framework of an artwork. He adheres to the position that "Even the basic task of recognizing a change of state is, more often than not, heavily dependent on interpretation."[102] Slow cinema is a prime example of this statement as will be shown later on. Additionally, Schmid mentions that eventfulness is a culture-specific phenomenon[103], and this aspect is also very much manifest in the interpretation of every film, not just slow cinema. The context is also decisive in triggering certain interpretation. In the case of film theory this issue is usually addressed under the tag of genre theory. Thus, in order for an event to be recognized as such, the issue of belonging to a certain group of films can be crucial. As this analysis of slow cinema will demonstrate, even the degree of narrativness between different narrative events in different slow cinema films can demonstrate a very large range.

Schmid´s colleague from the Hamburg Research Group *Narratology*, Peter Hühn, enlarges the notion of context, naming genre as well as culture, social group, historical period and author as belonging to the criteria.[104] Hühn also underlines that a change of state can be regarded as an event from the point of view of a character, but not from the point of view of the reader or vice versa.[105] This is a good argument that has to be kept in mind for further analysis, as this study's definition of slow cinema implies that the films defined as slow are those in which plot developments are regarded as slow from the point of view of the audience. Thus, one of the tasks of this present analysis is to flesh out this thesis.

In order to mark the differences between slow cinema and Hollywood productions, several tags of narrative theory should be highlighted. With its bold denial of a strongly intertwined narrative, durational cinema lays bare the core conventions of classic narrative film, developed

101 Wolf Schmid *Narrativity and Eventfulness* in Tom Kindt, Hans-Harald Müller (eds.) *What Is Narratology? Questions and Answers Regarding the Status of a Theory*, Berlin, 2003, p. 29.
102 Ibid., p. 30.
103 Ibid., p. 30-31.
104 Peter Hühn *Functions and Forms of Eventfulness in Narrative Fiction* in John Pier, Ángel Garcia Landa (eds.) *Theorizing Narrativity*, Berlin, 2011, p. 148.
105 Ibid., p. 148.

in the era before 1918.[106]

2.5. United narrative vs. objective realism

Hollywood prefers united narratives, which can be best described as a cause-and-effect chain, unbroken across the film.[107] The "dangling cause", which Thompson defines as information or action which leads to no effect until later in the film[108], is the decisive factor. The highest aim of all Hollywood films is to achieve closure in all plotlines and subplots.[109] Each narrative development has to be motivated and justified by other elements of the film.[110] Genre conventions often provide such motivation for story development.

In comparison, David Bordwell broaches the issue of art cinema narration by stating that this type of cinema also obeys certain conventions of style and story.[111] But it does so according to the art cinema tradition. That is why a device, which seems strange or unique per se, becomes familiar if seen in the context of art cinema and fulfils a function within the artwork. Bordwell further lists the conventions of art cinema. First of all, the way in which a movie is presented is as important as what is presented (or the plot can even be more important than the story).

Matthew Flanagan, who was one of the first to describe the phenomenon of slow cinema, also suggests that "In terms of storytelling, the familiar hegemony of drama, consequence and psychological motivation is consistently relaxed, reaching a point at which everything (content, performance, rhythm) becomes equivalent in representation."[112]

Secondly, in order to understand the story one must go outside the film to seek references. Bordwell stresses that precisely this feature marks the difference between mainstream and art cinema narration; the viewer has to fill in a lot of blank holes in the narrative and a lot can be left to the imagination. Additionally, expectations mostly turn out to be wrong, so even conflict situations shown onscreen are not developed further or somehow resolved.

An art film might even lack cohesion devices – elements that tie scenes together. A film can often be a long stretch of presented events, lacking hooks or a cause-and-effect-chain. It is also possible that an action's causality has to be figured out afterwards. It is important to keep in mind that in art films there always are scenes, events or characters that resist any interpretation.

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106 Kristin Thompson: *Storytelling in the New Hollywood. Understanding Classical Narrative Technique*, Cambridge, Mass., 1999. p. 10.
107 Ibid., p. 12.
108 Ibid., p. 12.
109 Ibid., p. 12.
110 Ibid., p. 13.
111 David Bordwell *How to watch an art movie, reel 1* in *Observations on film art*, August 26, 2012, available at http://www.davidbordwell.net/blog/2012/08/26/how-to-watch-an-art-movie-reel-1/ (Accessed 02.09.2012).
112 Matthew Flanagan *Towards an Aesthetic of Slow in Contemporary Cinema* in 16:9, 29, 2008, available at http://www.16-9.dk/2008-11/side11_inenglish.htm (Accessed 06.06.2012).

What are the main interpretative principles of art cinema? Bordwell puts it as follows:

> The art cinema motivates its narratives by two principles: realism and authorial expressivity.[113]

The author functions as an instance which structures the filmic word and he also becomes a formal component, which unifies the text. [114] The cinema-educated viewer already awaits traits characteristic to a director in question. The viewer throughout the viewing process attributes the events on the screen either to one or another tradition.[115]

Aesthetic strategy of ambiguity – that's how the art cinema solves the problem of the contradiction between realisms and authorial subjectivity.[116]

2.6. The protagonist and his goals

German film scholar Jens Eder developed the most comprehensive model for character analysis in film (*Die Figur im Film. Grundlagen der Figurenanalyse*, 2008). He defends the position that, although many theoreticians would argue that "the existence of characters is neither a necessary nor a sufficient condition for a text to be a narrative […] fictional narratives without characters are atypical."[117]

Kristin Thompson agrees with him that a goal-oriented protagonist is characteristic to classical [film] narratives. Consequently, character traits trigger the motivation for their choices and events, because they act consistently.[118] The character's desire provides the forward impetus for the narrative.[119] The character seeks to actively pursue goals and this defines the main lines of action. This leads to another definite trait of Hollywood narrative – that of the double plotline, with romance being the central one.[120] Types of protagonists in classic Hollywood can be divided in four groups: the "Idol", the "Everyman", the "Underdog" and the "Doomed".[121]

On the contrary, in art cinema narrative such a classification of characters is impossible. In art cinema the character is often forced to act, and isn't led by desires. These protagonists often do not pursue goals, or the goals are ambiguous. There also isn´t the time pressure and deadlines common in classical narrative. The characters in art cinema are mostly presented through their everyday routines.

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113 David Bordwell *The Art Cinema as a Mode of Film Practice* in David Bordwell *Poetics of Cinema*, New York, 2008, p.153.
114 Ibid., p.154.
115 Ibid., p. 156.
116 David Bordwell *Narration in the Fiction Film*, Madison, 1985, p. 208.
117 Jens Eder *Narratology and Cognitive Reception Theories* in Tom Kindt & Hans-Harald Müller (eds.) *What Is Narratology? Questions and Answers Regarding the Status of a Theory*, Berlin, 2003, p. 280.
118 Kristin Thompson *Storytelling in the New Hollywood. Understanding Classical Narrative Technique*, Cambridge, Mass., 1999, p. 13.
119 Ibid., p. 14.
120 Ibid., p. 14.
121 Ibid., p. 47.

As the reading of the newest narrative theory suggests a goal-orientated protagonist constitutes a dividing line between a classical and a non-classical plot. Marie-Laure Ryan, in describing the cognitive template upon which the narrative is built, names, alongside the construction of an agent and object and change of state, the network of connections constituted by the goals of the agent, his plans and emotions.[122] Ryan points out that the neglect of these connections creates low narrativity, which is usual for postmodern texts. Although slow cinema cannot be associated with postmodern cinema, a low degree of narrativity manifests itself in these films, which is closely connected to the weakened links between the protagonist, his goals and his actions. Nevertheless, this thesis will present the argument throughout that the four-act-schema, as proposed by Thompson, still has its usefulness here. This will be introduced in the next subchapter.

2.7. Four-act-schema

As already mentioned, Thompson names the four acts of any film as follows: the Setup, the Complicating action, the Development and the Climax.

In the setup, the initial situation is established and often goals are defined. In the complicating action, as Thompson quotes Syd Field, the action is taken in a new direction.[123] In the development new obstacles occur, which prevent the protagonist from reaching his goals.[124] In the climax, all the action heads towards the final resolution.[125] The story is finished by a short epilogue.

In her ground-breaking study Kristin Thompson also poses the question of how the large-scale parts are balanced.[126] She suggests that the 20 to 30-minute range might correspond to the attention span of the spectator. This could be the reason why slow cinema also partly sticks to this schema. However, this study will argue that in order for an analysis of the four-act-schema in slow cinema, these acts and their range have to be considered taking into account each particular film's degree of narrativity, the expectations of the viewer towards the film and the broader context.

2.8. Turning points and slow films

The defining moments for the narrative are so-called turning points. Kristin Thompson defines

122 Marie-Laure Ryan *On the theoretical Foundations of Transmedial Narratology* in Jan Christoph Meister (ed.) *Narratology beyond Literary Criticism. Mediality, Disciplinarity*, Berlin, 2005, p. 4.
123 Kristin Thompson *Storytelling in the New Hollywood. Understanding Classical Narrative Technique*, Cambridge, Mass., 1999, p. 28.
124 Ibid., p. 122.
125 Ibid., p. 29.
126 Ibid., p. 43.

them as crucial events or changes in the storyline.[127] Mostly it is both: a shift in the protagonist's goals and a shift to the next large part of the narrative. Turning points often occur at the end of each of the four parts, or just after the beginning of a new segment. But often a turning point isn't just a single moment, but an action that may last for some time. In any case, a turning point brings a functional change to the action. As David Bordwell, acknowledging Thompson's model, puts it, "Although all events in a plot may contribute to the overall progression, some intuitively stand out as significant moments, and others are clearly secondary."[128]

A turning point can occur when one goal is achieved and replaced by another one. Or it may mean a shift in tactics to achieve a goal.[129] In order to analyse film plots, Thompson takes the character´s goals and changes them to a criterion that helps to detect the four-act structure of the film.[130] This method is an analytical tool, which helps to obtain objective results from the narrative analysis.

For the analysis of slow cinema the character cannot always serve as the necessary crucial factor, as the character isn't the lynchpin of the story as in a mainstream film. Contrary to Hollywood films, we often do not get to know the goals of the character or his motivations.

This study proposes that in case of slow cinema, the analyst has to seek the turning points as events in the story that are somehow outstanding from the rest of the film. It might even be that in slow cinema any new information can define a turning point. But note that such turning points may be situated not only on the plot-level – in the case of slow cinema, any stylistic device that performs important storytelling functions can work as a turning point. In this regard, this study's definition of a turning point follows the definition of an event by René Audet. A loose definition of a turning point in slow cinema would be as follows: any new information, whether aural, verbal or visual, which seemingly leads the story into another direction, can function as a turning point. Another difference from classic narrative would be that these turning points often lead to seemingly nothing, as it later turns out. But when examined deeper, it becomes clear that this "nothing" means that the expectations raised by the narrative were not fulfilled.

Such turning points also possess another goal - they serve to renew the interest of the viewer in the story itself.

An interesting point is one mentioned by David Bordwell: that we usually build the story-world through landmarks, not the artistic details of setting, and that the audience overlooks stylistic

127 Kristin Thompson *Storytelling in the New Hollywood. Understanding Classical Narrative Technique*, Cambridge, Mass., 1999, p. 23.
128 David Bordwell *Three Dimensions of Film Narrative* in David Bordwell *Poetics of Cinema*, New York, 2007, p. 108
129 Kristin Thompson *Storytelling in the New Hollywood. Understanding Classical Narrative Technique*, Cambridge, Mass., 1999, p. 29.
130 Ibid., p. 27.

features altogether.[131] This project's thesis is that in slow cinema stylistics play an important role, and the target group, a cinema-educated audience, is able to acknowledge this.

In slow cinema, the turning point will not be obligatorily connected to the character's goals as in traditional filmmaking practice. Rather, it can be any part of the story which contains important information for the viewer and helps further develop the story.

Frankly, the detection of turning points in slow cinema is a problematic endeavour for a scholar. Because they are not as apparent as in mainstream cinema, almost every statement about a particular turning point can be contested. One can go even as far as to allege one can, present study included, read into it what one expects to see. One of the goals of this thesis is to demonstrate that, although opinions about particular turning points in slow cinema can differ, slow films can be divided into "digestible chunks"[132].

Also, turning points in art cinema broach the issue of a viewer's attention. In art cinema as a whole and in slow cinema in particular, it is often almost impossible to register all the important details during the first viewing. Thus, slow cinema demands repeated viewings and an often inevitable consultation of several paratexts such as film festival catalogues, press kits, internet resources etc., in order to understand the story. This poses a problem for a film scholar, because in order to model more or less correctly the process of understanding a film during viewing, one must rely on one's own contextual knowledge and on what one sees onscreen. However, understanding a film under such simplified conditions contradicts the demands of scientific research, which is primed to facilitate the understanding of an artwork through the giving of additional information. This analysis will try to think as a member of the target audience of slow cinema, but will also seek additional information about the films.

The description of main narrative features offered above does not take the viewer into consideration. But the cognitive aspect in the perception of a narrative has to be stressed since "the spectator´s comprehension of the story is the principal aim of narration."[133] Film scholar Jason Gendler has explained that in order to understand the story, we have to ponder both aspects – the cognition and the narrative construction, because "cognition alone is a little too flexible and disregards too much of the film's actual narrative information."[134] By adding the formal construction of the film to the analysis, it functions as a stabilizing force for cognitive actions.[135]

131 David Bordwell *Cognition and Comprehension. Viewing and Forgetting in* Mildred Pierce in David Bordwell *Poetics of Cinema,* New York, 2008, p. 143-144
132 David Bordwell *Three dimensions of film narrative* in David Bordwell *Poetics of Cinema*, New York, 2007, p. 109.
133 David Bordwell *Narration in the Fiction Film*, Madison, 1985, p. 30.
134 Jason Gendler *Where Does the Beginning End?* in *Projections. The Journal for Movies and Mind*, Vol. 6, Nr. 2, 2012, p. 67.
135 Jason Gendler *Where Does the Beginning End?* in *Projections. The Journal for Movies and Mind*. Vol. 6, Nr. 2, 2012, p. 67.

To begin: a delineation of David Bordwell's main ideas on film perception, not only because he is the most influential contemporary film theoretician, but also because his views belong to the cognitive film theory this study adheres to. The assumption on which his theory is based, that "media are regarded not as a code of signs with an intrinsic and fixed narrative meaning but as open-ended repertories of resources and devices"[136], is a premise which this study regards as an essential point of departure in the analysis of any film.

2.9. Role of the viewer

David Bordwell states that the most important is what the viewer sees – which information is given or which information is withheld.[137] This process can be circumscribed as film narration. In doing so the narrative tradition has to be considered, because each makes certain engineering principles more likely than others.[138]

But how can we understand the slow cinema films if they lack a tight plot, if the protagonist isn´t a psychologically developed character, if he has no goals, or if the goals are vague? In order to understand **any** film we use our abilities that come from our perception of images, from folk psychology and from social intelligence.[139] David Bordwell points to Paul Messaris, who clearly stated that we comprehend images using our abilities to recognize objects and spatial layouts in our everyday world.[140] For that no special training is required. The same applies to folk psychology – it draws on our common sense-reasoning, which, like our perception of images, are cross-cultural universals.[141] This finding is very important for the slow cinema examples as they come from different cultures. However, in due course the issue on the cross-cultural nature of slow cinema will have to be reassessed.

Returning to the question of narrative, David Bordwell subsumes the issue as follows:

> In principle, narrative is utterly opportunistic and promiscuous. It mobilizes systems and partial systems from all areas of life. It seizes anything that can serve its purpose, regardless of logical or ontological constraints, and slaps together all of disparate cues. Bent on shaping our experience in time, it draws upon whatever will do the job.[142]

If this is the case, then for this undertaking there must be a search for a method or approach that would serve as viewing heuristics in order to model the audience's possible reaction to films. Subsequently, this study will show that different pragmatic concepts can be of use. But

136 Marie-Laure Ryan *Moving Pictures* in Marie-Laure Ryan (ed.) *Narrative across Media*, Lincoln, 2004, p. 196.
137 David Bordwell *Visual Style in Cinema. Vier Kapitel Filmgeschichte*, Frankfurt am Main, 2001, p. 13.
138 David Bordwell *Three dimensions of film narrative* in David Bordwell *Poetics of Cinema*, New York, 2007, p. 126.
139 David Bordwell *Common Sense + Film Theory = Common-Sense Film Theory* in *Observations on film art*, May 2011. http://www.davidbordwell.net/essays/commonsense.php (Accessed 02.05.2012).
140 Ibid.
141 Ibid.
142 David Bordwell *Three dimensions of film narrative* in David Bordwell *Poetics of Cinema*, New York, 2007, p. 126.

before introducing these concepts the issue of a film viewer has to be discussed from two different perspectives. First of all, the overall filmic experience has to be described and the question about who constitutes the audience for slow cinema has to be broached.

2.10. Film as an experience

Although film theorist Vivian Sobchack´s views are grounded in phenomenology, which is not the concept deemed appropriate for this study's approach to slow cinema, she makes a properly good point in defining the film viewing´s process by stating that:

> (..) we see and understand a film not merely as a visible object (some thing already-seen, already-constituted) but also as a performative and communicative act of vision (a now- seeing, a now-constituting activity) that implicates a viewing subject (an always-perceptive and always-constitutive enworlded lived-body) engaged in the act of signifying.[143]

Thus, the film has to be understood not as a text, but as a performance in the way that Dana Polan envisioned in the mid-1980s. Drawing on the speech-act theory he states that "films are 'performative'"[144]. Their meaning doesn´t occur as a "natural reference." It is instead understood as a process wherein different contexts interact and act upon the filmic text. Gertrud Koch specifies this notion, naming the two apparatus that are crucial for the filmic performance: that of the cinema (a film camera and a projector, also a film theatre and screening conditions), and the perception apparatus of the spectator.[145] This approach fits the analysis of slow cinema, as it allows for an incorporation of the viewer's body in the process of perception. At the same time it encourages the examination of the artwork as a "structured event." [146] The assumption that film is a performative event also spurs a look at slow cinema not only as representation, but as a pure attraction. As the film examples will show, this is often the case.

In order to flesh out the principal tenants of this project, the notion of film as a performance yields an essential discussion which revolves around the much-contested issue of whether the artistic text or the context (in this case encompassing the viewer as well) are more decisive. The influential reception studies theorist Janet Staiger points to this topic in her book *Perverse Spectators: The Practices of Film Reception*, criticising the stance she and her colleagues David Bordwell and Kristin Thompson took on audiences in their watershed book *The Classical Hollywood Cinema: Film Style and Mode of Production to 1960*. At the time of books inception – at the end of the 1970s - they were all of the opinion that "*textuality* determined what people did."[147] That means that all the meanings and effects are generated by the text. Over the years

143 Vivian Sobchack *The Address of the Eye. A Phenomenology of Film Experience*, Princeton, 1992, p. 56.
144 Dana Polan *Film Theory Re-Assessed* in *Continuum: The Australian Journal of Media & Culture*. Vol. 1 no 2 (1987), available at http://wwwmcc.murdoch.edu.au/ReadingRoom/1.2/Polan.html (Accessed 23.10.2013).
145 Robin Curtis *How Do We Do Things With Films? Die Verortung der Erfahrung zwischen Wort und Fleisch* in Sabine Nessel, Winfried Pauleit, Christine Rüffert, Karl-Heinz Schmid, Alfred Tews (eds.) *Wort und Fleisch. Kino zwischen Text und Körper,* Berlin, 2008, p. 75 – 90.
146 Ibid., p. 76
147 Janet Staiger *Perverse Spectators: The Practices of Film Reception*, New York, 2000, p. 29.

however, Staiger has modified her position and argues that context is more significant than textual features in building up interpretations of films.[148] Under context she subsumes not only the interpretative strategies chosen by the viewers, but also the historical background which has constructed the individuals.[149] This position is closely connected with the concept of a film spectator who has undergone a considerable change over the years. As Staiger argues, all the classical cinematic texts work on "an essentially receptive and ideal spectator",[150] but this approach is also accepted, for example, by Bordwell. As already exemplified above, Staiger advances the view that the context is more important than the narrative design and staging of the film. And the context is the factor which fosters the spectator to generate "perverse meanings". However, for this project's purposes, a modified concept of the viewer is needed.

2.11. Natural audience of slow cinema

Ed Tan states that "As everybody chooses the films, which are the best suited to him, each film type has its own natural viewer." [151]

It was already mentioned that slow cinema is a film festival default-style. Taking into consideration the contemporary structure of the film market, it is important to highlight the screening conditions and the accessibility of these films. This leads us to the definition of the natural audience of these films, which are mainly screened at film festivals. Only a small part of them receive cinematic distribution or come out on DVD, but they might be made available on VoD platforms. It is a special niche of cinema culture that attract film critics, art film lovers and other enthusiasts looking for other, more creative approaches to film narratives and film as an art form. This is quite a distinct audience, and forms the opposite to the "natural" cinema viewer, who usually chooses to watch mainstream Hollywood productions. The attendees of film festivals and art film cinemas have a cultivated taste, developed over the years and through the viewing experience. American film critic Scott MacDacdonald even argues that all films are challenging for viewers. Thus, they have to learn their "mode of operation." This is the grounds for his concept of "acquired taste" – that viewers develop their preferences over the years.[152] Furthermore, Ed Tan has stated that each viewer knows what type of films appeal to him, and makes a choice.[153] It is also important to highlight the fact that love of slow cinema is closely connected to the phenomenon of cinephilia.

However, this group – a natural audience for slow cinema - cannot be handled as a homogenous entity. As Janet Staiger formulates:

> [..] each spectator is a complex and contradictory construction of such self-identities

148 Janet Staiger *Perverse Spectators: The Practices of Film Reception*, New York, 2000, p. 30.
149 Janet Staiger *Interpreting Films: Studies in the Historical Reception of American Cinema,* Princeton, 1992, p. 48.
150 Ibid., p. 51.
151 Ed S. Tan *Emotion and the Structure of Narrative Film*, Mahwah, 1996, p. 10
152 Quoted from James Peterson *Dreams of Chaos, Visions of Order: Understanding the American Avant-Garde Cinema*, Detroit, 1994, p. 2.
153 Ed S. Tan *Emotion and the Structure of Narrative Film*, Mahwah, 1996, p. 10.

> as gender, sexual preference, class, race, and ethnicity. The pertinence of each self-identity might at times dominate the others, perhaps overdeterminate or contradict as well. [154]

Even more, our personalities influence the interpretation of the filmic text.[155] Janet Staiger presents the idea that we cannot speak about a preferred meaning interpreted by the audience, because each viewer can generate `perverse` meanings which have not been implied by the authors.[156] The argument herein is that the artistic devices used in slow cinema readily invite such deviant meanings. The Greek filmmaker Theo Angelopolous, one of the influences for slow cinema, follows this line of thought saying that "the pauses, the dead time, give [the spectator] the chance not only to assess the film rationally, but also to create, or complete, the different meanings of the sequence."[157]

Surely slow cinema audiences have to be acknowledged as an interpretative community, but we cannot predict their comprehension of slow narratives, because even within this limited group we encounter very disparate interpretations of what is shown onscreen. This project's position is that this is connected to the narrative design of the plot, which has a low degree of narrativity (or weak narrativity). In any case, for slow cinema we have to acknowledge the plurality of possible reactions to film. However, as mentioned above, the perspective of a European cinephile will be decisive for the present study.

Picturing the process of film comprehension in terms of linguistic pragmatics is the most useful approach for this undertaking as it takes into account the contextual factors that influence our understanding of utterances.

2.12. Relevance theory and cinema pragmatics

This study does not intend to construct a full-blown theory of the comprehension of slow films, but a detailed view is needed in order to examine the act structures of the films. Relevance theory, as developed by Deidre Wilson and Dan Sperber (1986), in terms of cognitive pragmatics can serve as a comprehension heuristics offering a possibility of how to deal with the challenges posed by slow cinema narratives.

First of all, this theory justifies why slow films are worth watching, and furthermore why certain structures can be detected in them. At the heart of this theory lies the assumption that any act of making an utterance implies that what is being announced is worth listening to ("communicative principle of relevance").[158] In the contemporary art cinema market the film, before it is shot, has been approved by different commissions and financial funds (in

154 Janet Staiger *Interpreting Films: Studies in the Historical Reception of American Cinema*, Princeton, 1992, p. 13.
155 Ibid., p. 44.
156 Janet Staiger *Perverse Spectators: The Practices of Film Reception*, New York, 2000, p. 2.
157 Quoted in Tony Mitchell *Animating Dead Space and Dead Time* in *Sight& Sound* 50.1, 1980, p. 29-33.
158 Dan Sperber, Deidre Wilson *Relevance: Communication and Cognition* (2ed edition), Oxford, 1995, p. 260.

the form of a script), and their approval can be interpreted as a signal for the audience that this particular project was worth financing and thus, as a film, it is worthy to be presented to audiences.

Wilson and Sperber´s theory also acknowledges the subjectivity of the viewer, because they state that the particular utterance is made for a particular person at a particular time and under those particular circumstances. That leads to the conclusion that the relevance is always subjective, and this is one of the central assumptions in their theory.[159] As mentioned, slow cinema is precisely such a product (utterance - if we use the terminology of Wilson and Sperber who developed their thesis in respect to linguistics), not made for international multiplex cinema audiences, but for much smaller niche groups who attend film festivals across the world. These audiences, taking into account their experience with art cinema, have different expectations towards an artwork. Roger Odin, one of the most prominent theoreticians in the field of cinema pragmatics, explains it by naming them "institutional constraints"[160] – the institutional framework in which we watch a film will also delimit its intended meaning. It is an external and material dimension of the term "institution", and it involves film festivals, art house cinemas and so on. But an internal and mentalistic dimension that encompasses each viewer´s discursive competence also exists,[161] a feature for which this study uses the term "cinema educated viewer".[162] Both these aspects of institutions control the way in which a certain film will be comprehended. (Thus, it comes as no surprise that slow cinema has been dubbed the default film festival style, as both the construction of the film and the viewing conditions are closely linked as Roger Odin has shown).

Wilson and Sperber continue by saying that:

> According to relevance theory, utterances raise expectations of relevance […], because the search for relevance is a basic feature of human cognition.[163]

Sperber/Wilson further explain that, according to the relevance-theoretic during the comprehension procedure "each communicator aims at framing her message in such a way that the addressee will have to expend no more effort than necessary to process that message."[164] The interpretation of the utterance has to be easy accessible, and this condition alone gives the utterance its initial degree of plausibility.[165]

Additionally, every utterance has to create a contextual effect for the addressee – it has to

159 Charles Forceville *Pictorial Metaphor in Advertising*, London, 1998, p. 89.
160 Quoted in Warren Buckland *The Cognitive Semiotics of Film*, Cambridge, 2000, p. 97.
161 Warren Buckland *The Cognitive Semiotics of Film*, Cambridge, 2000, p. 97.
162 For a broader description of institution see Roger Odin *For a Semio-Pragmatics of Film* in Robert Stam & Toby Miller (eds*.) Film and Theory. An Anthology*, Malden, 2000, p. 57-59.
163 Deidre Wilson, Dan Sperber *Relevance theory* in Laurence R. Horn & Gregory Ward (eds.) *Handbook of Pragmatics,* Oxford, 2004, available at http://www.dan.sperber.fr/?p=93 (Accessed 14.07.2013).
164 Charles Forceville *Pictorial Metaphor in Advertising*, London, 1998, p. 88.
165 Deidre Wilson, Dan Sperber *Relevance theory* in Laurence R. Horn & Gregory Ward (eds.) *Handbook of Pragmatics,* Oxford, 2004, available at http://www.dan.sperber.fr/?p=93 (Accessed 14.07.2013).

relate to the information already obtained by him.[166]

The critical weakness of the relevance theory is their thesis that only those inferences that generate optimal contextual effect and ask only for minimal (or adequate) processing effort will be processed.[167] If the effort needed from the addressee to process a message is too great, then the communication process will break down. Sven Strasen correctly remarks that in the case of poetry, but also other literal texts, the effort needed for processing a message is comparably higher than for an everyday message. But the readers of such complex texts are a priori ready to invest in the processing, because they know from their experience that the effort will be rewarded with an especially high gain.[168] We cannot automatically assume though, that each reader will be ready to invest more in processing an inference. Obviously, it depends on the cognitive environment of the addressee as to whether he agrees to such an effort. Namely, people like professors of literature, for whom literature plays a very significant role in their lives, will be more ready for such a procedure than others. The question of increased demand needed in order to understand an artwork has to be addressed in connection to the analysis of slow cinema, because these films are not easily digestible. Strasen here broaches a question of a preferable group for the use of certain works of art. The previous subchapter defined cinema educated film festival visitors as such a group.

Here the study would like to follow another line of thought from Strasen, who, in speaking of poetic texts and pragmatics highlights the notion of weak implicatures, as developed by Sperber and Wilson. Whereas in the case of strong implicatures these are backed up by the speaker, weak implicatures are generated only by the listener. The greater the range of possible interpretations of a message, the weaker the implicatures and the more the addressee has to take on the responsibility for deriving them.[169] In the case of weak implicatures, the addressee cannot be sure, whether it (the interpretation the addressee makes) was intended by the sender as such.[170] Literary scholar Adrian Pilkington points out that "Individual readers will not access all the same implicatures or the same number of implicatures."[171] Thus, in the case of literary texts (or artworks in general), we can encounter numerous interpretations of the same work. It is a much contested issue whether we can speak about a preferred interpretation of an artwork within a particular social group. Strasen argues that within a specific group of

166 Warren Buckland *Relevance and Cognition: Towards a Pragmatics of Unreliable Filmic Narration* in Jürgen E. Müller (ed.) *Towards a Pragmatics of the Audiovisual. Theory and History*, Vol.2, Muenster, 1995, p.57.
167 Ibid., p.57.
168 Sven Strasen *Wie Erzählungen bedeuten: Pragmatische Narratologie* in Ansgar Nünning & Vera Nünning (eds.) *Neue Ansätze in der Erzähltheorie*, Trier, 2002, p. 212.
169 Dan Sperber, Deidre Wilson *Relevance. Communication and Cognition*. 2ed edition, Oxford, 1995, p. 199.
170 Sven Strasen *Wie Erzählungen bedeuten: Pragmatische Narratologie* in Ansgar Nünning & Vera Nünning (eds.) *Neue Ansätze in der Erzähltheorie*, Trier, 2002, p. 213.
171 Adrian Pilkington *Poetic Effects: A Relevance Theory Perspective* in Roger D. Sell (ed.) *Literary Pragmatics*, London, 1991, pp. 59-60.

addressees we will encounter more or less the same preferred interpretation[172], whereas the prominent film scholar Janet Staiger states that this issue has to be approached in a more detailed fashion.

Coming back to the principles of relevance theory, this study wished to highlight Sperber and Wilson's conviction that, in order to be understood, every utterance has to create a contextual effect. Knowing that the logical form of narrative film is incomplete and must be completed by the viewer,[173] this study shares the opinion of British film scholar Warren Buckland that the concept of non-demonstrative inferences is decisive for the analysis of a film.[174] Sperber and Wilson define such inferences as:

> (…) non-demonstrative inference, as spontaneously performed by humans, might be less logical process than a form of suitably constructed guesswork. If so, it should be seen as successful or unsuccessful, efficient or inefficient, rather than logically valid or invalid.[175]

Thus, when applied to cinematic comprehension, contextual effects are more important than just the visual content of the film for creating meaning out of the film's imagery.[176] This study's contention is that slow cinema, much more than mainstream film, relies on this strategy.

Finally, two objections have to be cleared. First of all, relevance theory is a communication theory that focuses on everyday face-to-face utterances. Can it also explain the exchanges we experience in our encounters with an artwork? Deirdre Wilson addresses this question in an article, *Relevance and the interpretation of literary work*, arguing that to infer the ideas the artist wants to communicate, the listener/ reader/ viewer still uses the same basic cognitive and communicative abilities applied in ordinary situations.[177] Moreover, Sperber & Wilson distinguish between two different levels at which the author performs acts of communication. On a lower level, he describes a fictional world, but on a higher level he is "showing this world to the reader as an example of what is possible, or conceivable."[178] Thus, the expectations of relevance on the lower level are to so called 'internal' expectations, but on the higher level form the 'external' presumption of relevance.

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172 Sven Strasen *Wie Erzählungen bedeuten: Pragmatische Narratologie* in Ansgar Nünning & Vera Nünning (eds.) *Neue Ansätze in der Erzähltheorie*, Trier, 2002, p. 210.
173 Jürgen E. Müller *Towards a Pragmatics of the Audiovisual II – or the Continuation of an Introduction* in Jürgen E. Müller (ed.) *Towards a Pragmatics of the Audiovisual. Theory and History* Vol.2, Muenster, 1995, p. 8-9.
174 Warren Buckland *Relevance and Cognition: Towards a Pragmatics of Unreliable Filmic Narration* in Jürgen E. Müller (ed.) *Towards a Pragmatics of the Audiovisual. Theory and History*, Vol.2, Muenster, 1995, p. 55.
175 Dan Sperber, Deidre Wilson *Relevance. Communication and Cognitio,* 2ed edition, Oxford, 1995, p. 69.
176 Warren Buckland *Relevance and Cognition: Towards a Pragmatics of Unreliable Filmic Narration* in Jürgen E. Müller (ed.) *Towards a Pragmatics of the Audiovisual. Theory and History*, Vol.2, Muenster, 1995, p. 55.
177 Deirdre Wilson *Relevance and the interpretation of literary works* in Ye Tian (ed.) *Working Papers in Linguistics*, Vol. 23, 2011, London´s Global University, available at http://www.ucl.ac.uk/psychlangsci/research/linguistics/publications/wpl/11papers/Wilson2011 (Accessed 20.05.2014).
178 Ibid.

Secondly, dealing with the inferring of utterances the sender wanted to communicate poses a problem of the so-called intentional fallacy. This issue forms a much discussed problem in literary criticism since at least 1946, when W.K. Whimsatt and M.C. Breadley published their article *The Intentional Fallacy*. They claimed that the meaning of the work itself can be found by examining the meaning of the words that constitute it and the syntax of the work.[179] Literary theorists, supporting the intentionalist strand, argue that the artist's intention is relevant to the meaning of the artwork.[180] According to Dickie and Wilson, the anti-institutionalist stance means that the work is seen as static.[181] However, this study will regard the encounter between an artwork and the audience as a process of communication and therefore the argument brought up by Noél Carroll is useful here. He asserts that the communicative aspect of art is an essential part in the act of experiencing it. His point of departure is the assertion that the process of experiencing art is similar to that of our everyday conversation, where our main aim is to infer what the speaker intended to say.[182] For that reason, the knowledge of the actual intentions of the artist is relevant for the development of an interpretation.[183]

At this the project will abstain from delivering a definite answer about which position could be the right one. Instead, during the analysis of slow cinema the issue of authorial intentions and their confirmability may acquire a new facet.

2.13. Breakdown in communication

As mentioned, the principle of relevance assumes that it is mutually important for both the sender and addressee to form an utterance that will create the optimal contextual effect with only a small amount of processing effort needed (in film studies, the term "the economy of narrative" is used for this[184]). For the addressee it is equally important to form the inference that corresponds to the sender´s message.[185] Warren Buckland explains that:

> For pragmatists, breakdowns in communication are to be expected because messages or assumptions communicated from sender to addressee are not embedded in the logical form of an utterance, but must be generated, in accordance to the principle of relevance, by the addressee on the basis of the utterance´s incomplete logical form.[186]

All this leads this study to the general point of departure of the relevance theory, which completely differs from the traditional code model. Namely, the latter suggests that the

179 Georgie Dickie, W. Kent Wilson *The Intentional Fallacy: Defending Beardsley* in *The Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism*. Vol. 53, No. 3, 1995, p. 233.
180 Ibid., p. 234.
181 Ibid., p. 234.
182 Georgie Dickie, W. Kent Wilson *The Intentional Fallacy: Defending Beardsley*, *The Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism*, Vol. 53, No. 3, 1995, p. 245.
183 Noél Carroll *Beyond Aesthetics: Philosophical Essays*, Cambridge, 2001, p. 196-197.
184 Warren Buckland *Relevance and Cognition: Towards a Pragmatics of Unreliable Filmic Narration* in Jürgen E. Müller (ed.) *Towards a Pragmatics of the Audiovisual. Theory and History*, Vol.2, Muenster, 1995, p. 63.
185 Ibid., p. 57-58.
186 Ibid., p. 58.

message is coded by the sender and the receiver decodes it using the same code.[187] For cinema, Bordwell argues, the code model is completely unfeasible because we cannot think of film viewing as a process whereby a certain message is passed from the filmmaker to the viewer. Instead, he regards the process of experiencing film as convergent inference making, where the filmmaker designs the film in a way that yields certain reactions from the viewer and these are more or less foreseen by the filmmaker (inferential elaboration).[188]

The model on which Sperber/Wilson build upon adheres to the thesis that in the communication process the sender "provides evidence of her intension to convey a certain meaning and, in doing so, "the sender´s utterance [..] modifies the cognitive environment of the addressee."[189] On the grounds of these changes the addressee constructs the meaning of the message the sender wishes to communicate.[190] In further building on this new model, Roger Odin concludes that the production of a text is a twofold process. The first part takes place during the production of the text, but the second during its reading and reception. The more determinations both share, the more both texts resemble each other. [191]

This fact leads Warren Buckland to conclude, quite dramatically, that the pragmatic theory of meaning also entails the failure in the communication.[192]As he rightly remarks, in the case of pragmatics the meaning is not fixed in advance. Instead, it is generated in the moment when the utterance is being made in various contexts.[193] This point has to be borne in mind for the analysis of slow cinema, because, as this study will argue, not all developments in slow cinema narratives display clear-cut narrativity, and thus supplementary meaning is not blocked off. Consequently, the preferred meaning is not always easy to grasp. Thus the failure in the communication process can even become a norm.

If we return to David Bordwell's statements as described above, it is obvious that mainstream film follows the principles of relevance. But in slow cinema we encounter a situation whereby the viewer, seeking the most plausible interpretation of the onscreen events, cannot always use the shortest and easiest way in discovering the relevance of an event for further plot development. Communication can even break down as foreseen by Sperber/Wilson and stressed by Odin. This project's position is that it is specifically from this situation that opinions of slow cinema, such as those in the much-discussed Dan Kois' article *Eating Your Cultural*

187 Deidre Wilson, Dan Sperber *Relevance Theory* in Laurence R. Horn & Gregory Ward (eds.) *Handbook of Pragmatics,* Oxford, 2004, available at http://www.dan.sperber.fr/?p=93 (Accessed 14.07.2013).
188 David Bordwell *Three dimensions of film narrative* in David Bordwell *Poetics of Cinema*, New York, 2008, p. 124.
189 Warren Buckland *Relevance and Cognition: Towards a Pragmatics of Unreliable Film* in Jürgen E. Müller (ed.) *Towards a Pragmatics of the Audiovisual. Theory and History*, Vol.2, Muenster, 1995, p. 56.
190 Ibid., p. 56.
191 Roger Odin *Kunst und Ästhetik bei Film und Fernsehen. Elemente zu einem semio-pragmatischen Ansatz. Montage AV*, 11/2/2002 p. 42.
192 Warren Buckland *The Cognitive Semiotics of Film*, Cambridge, 2000, p. 80-81.
193 Ibid., p. 81.

Vegetables[194] in *The New York Times*, arise. This article kicked off a discussion on whether a lengthy film that is hard to watch is always more valuable than an easily digestible Hollywood action film. A review of the whole discussion would digress from the subject at hand, but the aspect of boredom, which has inevitably been associated with slow films as well as its predecessors such as Antonioni or Tarkovsky, will be touched upon. Roger Odin, with his semio-pragmatic approach to film, broached this issue on a theoretic level. He states that the boredom or displeasure felt by a viewer arises from false expectations – it is a "sanction pronounced by this institution against a film that blocks the process of 'mise-en-phase'[195]."[196] However, one can suppose that in slow cinema we cannot assume boredom as a sanction – punishment for not being able or ready to invest the effort required to understand an idiosyncratic narrative. Boredom while experiencing these films is a bodily effect, and one of the purposes of the filmmakers was to achieve it. David Bordwell acknowledges time and again that:

> film directors are excellent practical psychologists, exploiting not only our abilities to perceive and comprehend and infer but also our deficiencies – all for the sake of guiding us to have the sort of experience they aim to generate.[197]

In the case of slow cinema, boredom can be, amongst others, one of these possible effects. However, this study's position is to strongly stress that contrary to Bordwell, in slow cinema the question remains whether all the effects a film generates in the viewer have been foreseen by the filmmaker.

In the case of slow cinema, we do have to take into account that communication cannot be described only by using either Bordwell's version (it is successful), or Odin's idea about the breakdown of communication. In slow cinema many nuanced possibilities come to the fore.

As Edward Branigan rightly remarks, "the narration of the story must also *block* other possible combinations" for interpreting a particular message.[198] Wilson and Sperber do not consider that a range of meanings are possible, however, slow cinema encourages deviant interpretations. The prime reason revolves around the fact that, in comparison to mainstream film, slow cinema directors do not provide the audience with "ostensive stimuli" that would be as easy for the viewers to understand.[199]

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194 Dan Kois *Eating Your Cultural Vegetables* in *The New York Times*, 29.04.2011, available at http://www.nytimes.com/2011/05/01/magazine/mag-01Riff-t.html?pagewanted=all&_r=0 (Accessed 12.06.2011).
195 For the definition of 'mise-en-phase' as understood by Odin see Buckland *The Cognitive Semiotics of Film*, Cambridge, 2000, p. 94-95.
196 Roger Odin *For a Semio-Pragmatics of Film* in Robert Stam & Toby Miller (eds*.) Film and Theory. An Anthology*, Malden, 2000, p. 61.
197 David Bordwell *Neo-Structuralist Narratology and the Functions of Filmic Storytelling* in Marie-Laure Ryan (ed.) *Narrative across Media*, Lincoln, 2004, p. 216.
198 Edward Branigan *Towards a Pragmatics of Narrative* in Jürgen Müller (Ed.) *Towards a Pragmatics of the Audiovisual*. Vol. 2, Muenster, 1995, p. 54.
199 Deidre Wilson, Dan Sperber *Relevance theory* in Laurence R. Horn & Gregory Ward (eds.) *Handbook of Pragmatics,* Oxford, 2004, available at http://www.dan.sperber.fr/?p=93 (Accessed 14.07.2013).

2.14. Emotional response

Finally, one shortcoming of the relevance theory has to be underlined, namely, that Sperber/ Wilson do not take into account the affective response of the spectator. Buckland expresses the opinion that in doing so they "conform to the fallacy dominant in cognitive science, philosophy, and linguistics, that human beings are purely rational communicators, interested only in the efficiency and productivity of information processing."[200]

More and more researchers of cognition acknowledge the role of emotions in the process of comprehension.[201] Carl Plantinga and Greg M. Smith, in their co-edited milestone volume *Passionate Views: Film, Cognition, and Emotion,* emphasize this precisely - the division between mind and brain common in cognitive psychology until recently, turned out to be the wrong direction. Neuropsychological research has shown that there are complex relationships between bodily states and thought processes.[202] Thus, film studies too have to acknowledge the importance of emotions in structuring the film viewing experience. Even more, both authors claim that "emotion and cognition are not necessary enemies. A cognitive understanding of emotions asserts exactly the opposite: that emotions and cognitions tend to work together."[203]

This thesis is not intended as a nuanced treatise of slow cinema from the perspective of emotional research. However, since approaches derived from concepts uniting cognition and emotion seem to be particularly useful in gaining access to these peculiar works of art, the chapter about the film *Blissfully Yours* will be dedicated to it.

At this stage it should be noted that boredom, one of the effects generated by slow films, can be added to the list of emotional effects, such as suspense, curiosity, surprise and empathy.[204]

The final part of this chapter introduces the film examples chosen to illustrate some of the possibilities viewers have at their disposal in order for a screening of a slow film to become a successful experience. Additionally, alternatives for when a screening results in a walkout are sketched.

2.15. Choice of film examples

As outlined above, this study aims to take a functional approach in order to model the variety of engagements the audience undertakes to make sense out of a slow film, and therefore

200 Warren Buckland *Relevance and Cognition: Towards a Pragmatics of Unreliable Filmic Narration* in Jürgen E. Müller (ed.) *Towards a Pragmatics of the Audiovisual. Theory and History*, Vol.2, Muenster, 1995, pp. 65-66.
201 Charles Forceville *Relevanz und Prägnanz: Kunst als Kommunikation* in *Zeitschrift für Semiotik*, Vol. 31, No. 1-2, 2009, p. 52.
202 Carl Plantinga & Greg M. Smith *Introduction* in Carl Plantinga & Greg M. Smith (eds.) *Passionate Views: Film, Cognition, and Emotion*, Baltimore, 1999, p. 2.
203 Ibid., p. 2.
204 Jens Eder *Narratology and Cognitive Reception Theories* in Tom Kindt & Hans-Harald Müller *What Is Narratology? Questions and Answers Regarding the Status of a Theory*, Berlin, 2003, p. 290.

proposes that there are several possible modes that can function concurrently. Analysis of all the case studies herein start with a description of the film, before discussing such core issues from narratology as degree of narrativity, tellability, and the construction of the four-act-scheme. In due course the effects of the core issues on the viewer are explained, using such notions from cognitive research and pragmatics as context, emotions, moods, expectations, immersion, suspense and interest.

I will begin my analysis with the film *Goodbye, Dragon Inn* by Tsai Ming-Liang. With its passive characters and long shots where "nothing happens", this film represents an "average" slow film. Thus, it is a good starting point for the analysis. *Goodbye, Dragon Inn* serves as an example for the claim that depending on whether the viewer has had access to contextual knowledge such as Taiwanese cinema history and the filmmaker's signature features, he will develop different interpretations of the story.

Liverpool by Lisandro Alonso is already an extreme example, because it represents the minimal strain of slow cinema in terms of its narrative design. However, as the story as such has a high tellability factor, the result is that *Liverpool* constantly frustrates viewer expectations. This subchapter will conclude with thoughts on the question *What do pictures want?*, because it broaches the issue of how viewers may deal with such distinct characteristics as post-action lags and extensive durational shots, which may appear combined.

The films *The Turin Horse* by Béla Tarr and *Fallen* by Fred Kelemen are counterexamples. Both represent the so-called parametric narrative, which is one of the tags used for slow films, but while *The Turin Horse* is a prime example, *Fallen* can be regarded as weak. As will be explained, a differentiation of this kind can be made if we consider not only the staging of the film (with which the parametricity is explained), but also the degree of narrativity in each of the examples.

Blissfully Yours by Apichatpong Weerasathakul exemplifies De Luca's thesis that there is a certain tendency towards sensual narration in contemporary cinema. This subchapter will address the issue of the role of emotions and bodily reactions in the structuring of the cinematic experience. However, as *Blissfully Yours* is not representative of classic mainstream cinema, traditional approaches used to analyse emotions in cinema cannot be applied here. Thus, focus will be on the mood-cue approach developed by Greg M. Smith. Further on, the study will touch upon such aspects as *immersion* into the image and into the story, and question how this term has to be modified in order to suit slow cinema. A similar reformulation is needed for the term *suspense*, which plays a part in any film - if looked at in terms of the viewer's interest in finding out "what happens next?"

The final example, *Colossal Youth* by Pedro Costa, lies at the far end of the chosen example spectrum. It is most extreme in terms of narrative construction and thus poses a tremendous challenge for the viewer. This subchapter will look for an answer to why the media renamed

the film *Colossal Bore*, and why the screenings in Cannes resulted in walkouts. This study will argue that the breakdown in communication between the film and its audience may have been caused by the low level of tellability of onscreen events, as well as the low level of narrativity. Combined with missing context assumptions, the result is a film consisting of fragments where the cause-and-effect chain, which in slow cinema in general is quite loose, is substituted by a series of events with no causal links.

The case studies chosen come from different countries, different film cultures, and are rooted in different cultural contexts. However, this project does not dwell on the cultural differences; instead the focus is on narrative structures that are cross-cultural and universal.

2.16. A practical side note

Contrary to their Hollywood counterparts slow films are virtually unknown, therefore for the purpose of analysis it is necessary to initially describe them scene by scene. The principal concern will be a close reading of narrative analysis, not the stylistics. The stylistics of the film will be looked at when the visual design acquires a narrative function. Or, when a scene's visual design can be described as a narrative event.

And finally, the description of the events taking place onscreen will be depicted in terms of the author's impressions and comprehension, as opposed to the script. However, this also implies that the descriptions cannot be held to completeness and correctness because of a reoccurring lack of clarity of the events onscreen. This happened, for example, due the darkness of the images or due to lacking knowledge in cultural background that would enable a better understanding. Thus, there may be questions raised on the descriptions of the film's structure, and such an approach runs counter to the tradition of an all-savvy film scholar. However, for the purpose of this project an "incomplete" understanding of a film is essential, as it portrays an actual cinema experience more accurately.

This approach exemplifies the general problem every researcher faces when trying to model reactions of actual film viewers. In terms of problem-solving theory there are three possible approaches. The maximizing strategies are for well-formed problems yielding clear-cut solutions regardless of cost. The satisfying strategies use only minimal problem-solving effort and tend to produce only one satisfying solution. Optimizing strategies are not content with minimal coherence and try to find the best available alternative. However, that implies a greater effort is needed in order to find a solution. Interestingly, as Peterson remarks, unlike the maximizer, the optimizer may decide at a certain point that additional effort will not pay off and ends the search for coherence. [205]

James Peterson, in speaking about avant-garde cinema, supposes that most viewers and film

205 James Peterson *Dreams of Chaos, Visions of Order: Understanding the American Avant-Garde Cinema*, Detroit, 1994, p. 21-22.

critics of the avant-garde "are optimizers who are not satisfied with establishing minimal coherence."[206] Peterson also makes the important observation that, although avant-garde cinema does not represent a well-formed problem (a problem with only one possible solution), maximizing strategies would not be a suitable approach to these films. Although not every detail can be explained in experimental cinema and not all elements of the work can acquire coherence, critics and academics may still be willing to pursue it. Practically though, dedicated critics are optimizers, because even if a vast amount of information about a particular film has been collected, only a limited amount can be used in writing about it.[207]

Avant-garde film viewers proceed differently. They are, without doubt, optimizers "whose goal is to establish as much coherence as they can on the basis of limited viewing of the film, their knowledge of the work of the filmmaker at hand, and their knowledge of the history of the avant-garde cinema."[208]

Although Peterson is speaking of the avant-garde, which cannot be compared to slow cinema (although the chapter on the genesis of slow cinema will demonstrate the influences of the avant-garde on slow cinema), his explanations of film viewers as optimizers work for slow cinema as well. As there are often several possibilities as to how events developing onscreen can be experienced, the notion of a well-structured problem cannot be attested to these films. In case of slow cinema however, this project does not regard cognitive interpretation as the only way of coming to terms with these artworks. This is one of premises upon which the argument in the following pages is built.

206 James Peterson *Dreams of Chaos, Visions of Order: Understanding the American Avant-Garde Cinema,* Detroit, 1994, p. 22.
207 Ibid., p. 22.
208 Ibid., p. 22.

II. Case studies

1 . *Goodbye, Dragon Inn* (dir. Tsai Ming-Ling, Taiwan, 2003) - with or without contextual knowledge?

As already mentioned, Tsai Ming-Liang is one of the most prominent representatives of slow cinema – his name is inevitably found on each of the various lists of slow cinema filmmakers. However, he is more known as one of the representatives of the Second New Wave of Taiwanese cinema (along with Edward Yang and Hou Hsiou-Hsien).[209]

His overall approach to the narrative organization of the film *Goodbye, Dragon Inn* can be subsumed under the thesis that he plays with the viewer's expectations about what can be assessed as relevant for the understanding of the story, and the attesting of relevance is closely connected to the viewer's cultural background.

1.1 Cinema and description – a problematic issue

As each scene of the film *Goodbye, Dragon Inn* mostly consists of one take, it seems useful for the analysis to set out what is happening in each shot of the film. Furthermore, the description of the film's structure is summarized following the act scheme of Kristin Thompson. The explanations for the division of the plot into acts will be delivered in due course.

However, here we already arrive at the problem of the description of such a durational film. Namely, in trying to describe what is happening in the shot, a viewer is already looking for cause-and-effect chains and seeking motivation for the actions taking place. Or, as according to Tzvetan Todorov "[..] to describe is to try to obtain, on the basis of certain theoretical premises, a rationalized representation of the object of study".[210]

In writing a sentence to subsume the action of the scene, one cannot do justice to the hovering narration. One can state how long a shot takes, but it falls short in expressing the exhausting duration of several very long shots. They can be an ordeal for the audience, but this ordeal cannot be experienced when written down on the paper; it sometimes takes just five words to summarize a scene that lasts for three minutes. This is a question of a proper medium for depicting something. Cinema is a time-based art, especially slow cinema with the camera portraying the real duration of an event or activity with almost no use of elliptical editing. In any case, this is an example of Marshall McLuhan's "the medium is the message", which

209 Tsai Ming-Liang was born in 1957 in Malaysia, but he immigrated to Taipei (Taiwan) in 1977 to study at the Chinese Culture University. He made his first full-length feature film in 1992 – *Rebels of the Neon God*. My case study *Goodbye, Dragon Inn* belongs to the mid-part of his career, having been shot in 2003 after his internationally wildly acknowledged films *Vive L´Amour* (1994, Golden Lion at Venice Film Festival), *The River* (1997, Silver Bear at Berlin Film festival), *The Hole* (1998, FIPRESCI-Prize at Cannes Film Festival) and *What Time Is It There?* (2001).

210 Tzvetan Todorov *Littérature et signification*, 1967, p.7, quoted in Seymour Chatman *Story and Discourse: Narrative Structure in Fiction and Film*, Ithaca, 1978, p. 17.

implicates the medium as also shaping the content of the message.[211]

But this problem can also be approached from another direction. Namely, writing down the events that happen in the film in story form, turns everything into a description. A description is generally considered as one of the non-narrative elements of a literary text. However, in a text, narrative and non-narrative elements are usually mixed.[212] As the narratologist Vyacheslav Yevseyev argues, comparing texts that include a lot of such non-narrative elements as descriptions with those that include a lot of action provide means for measuring the degree of the narrativity of a particular text.[213] Apart from the fact that this approach is very disputable as criticized by Marie-Laure Ryan,[214] Seymour Chatman argues that description is impossible in narrative films because the story-time (the duration of the events of the narrative) continues as long as the film is projected on the screen.[215] Chatman has devoted a whole chapter in his book *Coming to Terms: The Rhetoric of Narrative in Fiction and Film* to the problem of description in cinema. He links the notion of description in this art with the situations wherein the story time has been suspended, and thus a narrative pause is generated.[216] He mentions different examples of description in cinema, deriving most of them from the films of Michelangelo Antonioni. However, this study argues that in the case of slow cinema we encounter another example of cinematic description. We can suppose that a lot of scenes in slow cinema that capture a mundane activity in its full duration, like a character departing through a corridor, can be labelled as description. In these scenes the story time still goes on, but the activity as such has such a low level of narrativity that for the viewer looking for further story developments, these stretched activities may seem useless.

Returning to the question of description, one final remark has to be made - namely, the fact that each genre appears to prefer different narrative elements. Thus, whereas thrillers and detective stories demand action and changes of state, in tragedy, sentimental romance and comedies of errors mental representations[217] of the characters are decisive.[218]

The inclination is to think that in slow cinema narratives where moments of strong narrativity are mixed with lengthy stretches of descriptions for which the weak narrativity is decisive, we

211 Charles Forceville *Non-verbal and multimodal metaphor in a cognitivist framework: Agendas for* Research in Gitte Kristiansen, Michel Achard, René Dirven and Francisco Ruiz de Mendoza Ibàñez (eds.) *Cognitive Linguistics: Current Applications and Future Perspectives*, Berlin, 2006, p. 379 – 402, available at http://dare.uva.nl/document/48558 (Accessed 02.10.2013).
212 Vyacheslav Yevseyev *Measuring Narrativity in Literary Texts* in Jan Christoph Meister, Tom Kindt and Wilhelm Schernus (eds.) *Narratology beyond Literary Criticism. Mediality, Disciplinarity*, Berlin, 2005, p. 109.
213Ibid., p. 109.
214 Marie-Laure Ryan *On theoretical Foundations of Transmedial Narratology* in Jan Christoph Meister (ed.) *Narratology beyond Literary Criticism. Mediality, Disciplinarity*, Berlin, 2005, p. 6.
215 Seymour Chatman *Story and Discourse: Narrative Structure in Fiction and Film*, Ithaca, 1978, p. 74.
216 Seymour Chatman *Coming to Terms: The Rhetoric of Narrative in Fiction and Film*, Ithaca, 1990, p. 42.
217 For the concept of mental representation in cognitive science see Pitt, David, *Mental Representation* in Edward N. Zalta (ed.) The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy (Fall 2013 Edition), available at http://plato.stanford.edu/archives/fall2013/entries/mental-representation/ (Accessed 2.05.2014).
218 Marie-Laure Ryan *Avatars of Story*, Minneapolis, 2009, p. 10.

can use the observation of James Phelan, who proposes hybrid narrativity in the case of some texts.[219]

The consequences this may have for the degree of narrativity in these stories will be discussed later on.

1.2 Comprehension process according to the Relevance theory

According to Wilson and Sperber, authors of the Relevance Theory, the comprehension process encompasses the following procedures: 1) the building of explicatures via decoding, disambiguation, reference resolution, and other pragmatic enrichment processes. In the case of such multimodal artwork as film, this would mean the recognition of the content of the visual and aural channels.[220]Although the authors of the Relevance theory state that explicatures can always be either true or false, which would not be possible for images, Forceville suggests that in the case of images we can also derive explicatures, because some content can be inferred from every image.[221]

The next stage is the construction of an appropriate hypothesis about the intended contextual assumptions or, in relevance–theoretic terms - implicated premises. And finally, the construction of an appropriate hypothesis derived from the contextual information. These are the so-called implicated conclusions.[222]

First of all, it has to be stressed that these three sub-tasks are not sequentially ordered but take place in parallel with one another. Or, as Sperber and Wilson have put it "Comprehension is an

219 James Phelan *Experiencing Fiction: Judgments, Progressions, and the Rhetorical Theory of Narrative*, Columbus, 2007, p. 151-152.

220 I completely agree with Charles Forceville that the Relevance theory model, though developed with regard to verbal communication, can also be applied to such multimodal communication form as film. For further argumentation about the application of the Relevance theory to visual and multimodal communication see Charles Forceville *Relevance Theory as a model for analyzing visual and multimodal communication* in David Machin (ed.) *Visual Communication* [to be published in 2014]. Draft available at http://muldisc.wordpress.com/2013/08/20/relevance-theory-as-model-for-analyzing-visual-and-multimodal-communication/ (Accessed 1.10.2013).
and Charles Forceville *Relevanz und Prägnanz: Kunst als Kommunikation* in *Zeitschrift für Semiotik*, Vol. .31, No 1-2, 2009, p. 47-63,
and Charles Forceville *Addressing an audience: Time, place, and genre in Peter van Straaten´s calendar cartoons* in *Humor* 18-3, 2005, p. 247-278.

221 Charles Forceville *Relevance Theory as a model for analyzing visual and multimodal communication* in David Machin (ed.) *Visual Communication* [to be published in 2014]. Draft available at http://muldisc.wordpress.com/2013/08/20/relevance-theory-as-model-for-analyzing-visual-and-multimodal-communication/ (Accessed 1.10.2013).

222 Deidre Wilson, Dan Sperber *Relevance theory* in Laurence R. Horn & Gregory Ward (eds.) *Handbook of Pragmatics,* Oxford, 2004, available at http://www.dan.sperber.fr/?p=93 (Accessed 14.07.2013).

on-line process." [223]

For the understanding of the comprehension processes of a slow film, it is important to draw the attention to the fact that both of these kinds of implicatures – implicated premises and implicated conclusions - may vary in their strength.[224] We speak of strong implicatures when the mutual manifestness of a message is very obvious, but weak implicatures can occur when a widened range of possibilities to choose from are present. A point can even be reached when no encouragement is given at all. In the case of strong implicatures the author of the utterance is responsible for the assumptions, but in the case of weak implicatures the responsibility lies fully on the side of the receiver.[225] Strong implicatures are those "for whose derivation the sender takes responsibility", but in weak ones "the addressee derives at his own discretion". [226]

As Sperber and Wilson rightly remark, at the weakest end of the scale of implicatures the receiver possesses less and less confidence about the particular speaker's thoughts, and this is precisely where the indeterminacy lies.[227] This opinion is also consistent with David Bordwell's stance – even though he builds his cognitive model of film comprehension on the assumption that the text is so created that it seeks certain intersubjective regularities of response, he acknowledges the existence of zones of interdependency in cinematic interpretation intentionally constructed by the producers. [228]

1.3. Sender of the message

Before further examination of the issue of implicatures, a side-remark has to be made. The Relevance theory and its adherents always speak of the sender of a message. It should hereby be stated that over the course of this analysis neither the notion of the "sender" as a particular filmmaker, nor the use of the concepts of "implied author"[229] or "implied filmmaker" have been utilized.[230] The study instead followed David Herman's suggestion – he uses the term 'intentionality' as an analytical tool for approaching this issue. His position is worth quoting here at length:

> Rather than being localized in particular minds, intentionality in narrative contexts is built into the doing, the activity structure, of storytelling and story-interpretation. (…) such intentions are distributed across text producers, text interpreters, textual

223 Deidre Wilson, Dan Sperber *Relevance theory* in Laurence R. Horn & Gregory Ward (eds.) *Handbook of Pragmatics,* Oxford, 2004, available at http://www.dan.sperber.fr/?p=93 (Accessed 14.07.2013).
224 Dan Sperber, Deidre Wilson *Relevance. Communication and Cognition*. 2ed edition, Oxford, 1995, p. 199.
225 Ibid., p. 199.
226 Charles Forceville *Relevance Theory as a model for analyzing visual and multimodal communication*. David Machin (ed.) *Visual Communication* [to be published in 2014]. Draft available under http://muldisc.wordpress.com/2013/08/20/relevance-theory-as-model-for-analyzing-visual-and-multimodal-communication/ (1.10.2013)
227 Dan Sperber, Deidre Wilson *Relevance. Communication and Cognition*. 2nd edition, Oxford, 1995, p. 200.
228 David Bordwell *Neo-Structuralist Narratology and the Functions of Filmic Storytelling* in Marie-Laure Ryan *Narrative Across Media. The Languages of Storytelling*, Lincoln, 2004, p. 212, 218.
229 Wayne C.Booth *The Rhetoric of Fiction* (2ed Edition), Chicago, 1983, p. 431.
230 Berys Gaut *The Philosophy of the Movies: Cinematic Narration* in Peter Kivy (ed.) *The Blackwell Guide to Aesthetics*, Malden, 2004, p. 248.

> designs, and the communicative environments in which such designs are produced and interpreted.[231]

German narratologist Jan Alber continues this train of thought by stressing that in the case of cinematic narration, where we can never be sure of the precise intentions of a filmmaker and of the sheer number of people involved, it makes sense to use the concept of hypothetical intentionalism. To interpret a film **as if** there was a rational agent who made the choices. Thus, the hypothetical filmmaker as Alber labels it, "denotes the single entity to which the viewer ascribes conscious or unconscious motivations that actuated the professionals who were responsible for the making of the film in question."[232] Alber also underlines the advantages of this concept over the others. Namely, this concept does not require that the interpreter is absolutely sure about his inferences about what the author might have wanted to communicate. Hypothetical filmmaker allows for speculation.[233]

For the sake of convenience this study will still use the name of the particular filmmaker, but will actually be referring to the hypothetical filmmaker behind it.

1.4. Explicatures in *Goodbye, Dragon Inn*

The following description of the film *Goodbye, Dragon Inn* has been carried out by mainly taking into account the decoding of the visual images and its accompanying aural information, and inferring their explicatures. It can be deduced that in case of slow cinema, even if the explicatures may tend to belong to strong explicatures, the realm of implicatures belongs to the far end of the weakness scale, because broader contextual information is often not accessible during the film's projection. Thus, the whole level of implicated conclusions often stays inaccessible for most of the audience. Consequently, although the viewer can recognize what is depicted onscreen and understand what is being said (perhaps only with the help of subtitles), their interpretation of the film may not lead them to be able to answer "*What is it about?*" and "*Why does the filmmaker want to tell me this particular story*?" The absence of "the message" in a film may not lead to negative opinions about the quality of the artwork, but may lead to a breakdown in communication between the film and its audience.

Charles Forceville states that altogether art represents weak communication, and visual art in particular.[234] He also doubts whether art has to fulfil the informative intention which,

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231 David Herman *Narrative Theory and the Intentional Stance* in *Partial Answers*, June 2008. Vol. 6, Iss. 2, p. 233-260, available at http://lion.chadwyck.co.uk/searchFulltext.do?id=R04219177&divLevel=0&area=abell&forward=critref_ft (Accessed 12.10.2013).
232 Jan Alber *Hypothetical Intentionalism: Cinematic Narration Reconsidered* in Jan Alber, Monika Fludernik (eds.) *Postclassical Narratology: Approaches and Analysis*, Columbus, 2010, p. 167-168.
233 Ibid., p. 177.
234 Charles Forceville *Relevanz und Prägnanz: Kunst als Kommunikation* in *Zeitschrift für Semiotik*, Vol.31, No t 1-2, 2009, p.51, 56.

besides the communicative intention, is one of two intentions of communication according to the Relevance theory by Sperber and Wilson.[235] Whereas the informative intention implies that the author wants to inform the audience about something, the communicative intention suggests that this informative intention wants to be communicated by the sender.[236] Whereas the communicative intention is also obvious in the case of art – a filmmaker's wish to screen his film in a theatre is already a manifestation of his communicative intention. But, as Forceville rightly remarks, artists often do not know precisely what messages they want to convey. And it's not even necessary that the artist always knows what messages he wants to communicate.[237] The preoccupation herein with the issue of communicative intention in art is not caused by the conviction that an artwork should always have a message. On the contrary – such a conclusion would lead us to the opinion that only edifying purpose can justify the existence of art, and with this opinion we would transport ourselves back to the 18th century. The nagging question is what is the surplus that slow films deliver to their audience if, for the most part, we do not encounter a stunning visual or aural track (as, for example, in the cinema *du look* of the 1980s in France) and the story, displaying tiresome ordinary activities, is an ordeal to watch. The answer to this question will be formulated at the end of this study.

In the next subchapter *Goodbye, Dragon Inn* will be described taking into account only the explicatures and strong implicatures. This is information that is more or less clearly communicated by the filmmaker using the tools at hand.

Everything that has to be inferred by the viewer through the process of weak implicatures activating various fields of contextual information (information not available during the viewing), will be explained in a subsequent subchapter. Although Sperber and Wilson stress that information processing during communication takes place simultaneously, the claim herein is that in case of this film, this third stage – implicated conclusions – can mostly take place only with delay. Namely, when the viewer is browsing the Internet etc. and acquires the contextual knowledge needed for building such conclusions.

During the description of the film the acts will be delineated using the terminology of Kristin Thompson. The second step will explain the contextual information needed in order to build implicated conclusions and, building on that, the degree of narrativity in *Goodbye, Dragon Inn* will be assessed. In conclusion will be an explanation of where and why act breaks were

235 Dan Sperber, Deidre Wilson *Relevance. Communication and Cognition*, 2nd edition, Oxford, 1995, p. 29.
236Ibid., p. 29.
237 Charles Forceville *Relevanz und Prägnanz: Kunst als Kommunikation*. *Zeitschrift für Semiotik*, Vol.31, No 1-2, 2009, p. 54.

inserted.

1.5.Description of the film's structure:

The Setup (minutes 1 – 31)

The film begins with the opening titles, whereas off-screen a voice narrates the beginning of a story. After the titles, the first shots are from an older Chinese action film that the viewer can recognize from the deteriorated condition of the colour film.

A cut to the next shot of a cinema auditorium with a film running on the screen and a hall full of viewers. Although it's a look through a crack in the curtains from behind the audience suggesting someone's subjective view, no character is identified either through the shot sequence or other filmic devices. In any case, only viewers familiar with cinematic codes would recognize that a shot identifying the person looking through the curtains is missing.

Several static long shots are devoted to the cinema audience. In the ensuing shot we see the cinema's entrance, which may not be obvious to all viewers. It is raining. After several seconds of the running time a person appears. It is up to the viewer to infer that this man is of Japanese nationality and that his moves indicate that he wants to buy a ticket. But for inattentive viewers this detail may remain unnoticed, because in the long shot the attention of the viewer is not guided by the filmmaker.

Next static long shot shows a long, poorly lit corridor - the constant sound of rain. After some time we notice a woman watching something through a crack in the door on the right side of the shot. In the background of the shot we see a person (after several viewings it's clear that it is the Japanese tourist), who discovers the entrance to the cinema hall and slips in. The woman limps and departs through the corridor.

In the next shot the cinema auditorium is empty, only a small child is sitting there, eating and watching a film; in the background, the Japanese tourist is looking for a seat. In the next shot we see the limping girl, who is now sitting in the ticket office and has prepared a steamed bun. She nibbles at it; the shot lasts for two and a half minutes. The shot is accompanied by the distant sound of the film screening.

Next shot: the Japanese tourist, sitting in the cinema, is being disturbed by the rustling of plastic and the sound of eating, which comes from the only other two viewers of the film (what they eat cannot be made out clearly, because the two viewers sit at a distance from the camera.) After some time, the Japanese man stands up.

The cashier slices the bun and wraps it in, and then she seems to be lost in thought. Throughout the next three shots the cashier travels around the cinema with a wrapped bun, the falling rain can be heard, the darkness of the cinema with long shadows and white light from the lamps

constitutes a bleak atmosphere. The silence in the wide corridors and the clatter of the film projector in the projection room only emphasize this.

The journey of the cashier ends in the projection room, where she leaves the bun.

In the next shot we see the Japanese tourist, sitting in the cinema (with the sound of an old Chinese action film in the off-screen). He wants to light a cigarette, but has no matches. He leans towards the man sitting in front of him but doesn't dare ask him, because precisely at that moment an invisible viewer from the row behind him suddenly puts his legs on the front seat – this event can unwittingly yield a smile from the audience of the real *Goodbye, Dragon Inn* film. In the background we see another man enter the cinema and sit down next to the Japanese man. The latter turns away from him but is trapped by the legs of the invisible viewer from the row behind. In the next shot, as the "newcomer" stands up and leaves, we see an older man enter the cinema on the far right. In the next shot the old man sits down next to the boy (for the sake of convenience these characters will be identified as grandfather and grandson although - no surprise - this storyline remains completely undeveloped over the course of the film and the roles of these characters can only be assessed by consulting external sources after the film screening). Thus, for the viewer it seems to be just a boy carrying no further meaning for story development.

Another man comes into the shot from the left and sits down next to the Japanese man. Several men leave the shot using the door on the far right.

This shot is followed by a shot from the back of the cinema auditorium, with the camera framing the cinema screen with fragments from the old Chinese action film flapping over the screen, and music from that film heard off-screen.

In the next shot the Japanese man sits down next to the grandfather. The Japanese man makes a tentative move in order to make a contact with the grandfather (to ask him for a light, because he still wants to light a cigarette), then he stands up and leaves the hall.

The setting of the next shot is the ladies' room, where the cashier checks each of the stalls – as the camera stays outside them (static long shot) - it isn't possible to specify what exactly she's doing. But from the noises we can guess that the cashier activates the flushes inside the stalls.

In the next shot, situated in the men's room, the Japanese man enters and pees next to another cinema patron. (The last two shots are dominated by the noise of running water.) A third man arrives at the urinals, a fourth one steps out of a stall, washes his hands and leaves. It's possible for the viewer to register that the Japanese man glances at him. A fifth man enters, moves almost to the right edge of the shot and picks up a pack of cigarettes, which he has supposedly forgotten and exits. The camera lingers on the three men at the urinals, who form a diagonal

line.

The next shot lasts for a minute and a half and in it we see the cashier who comes very slowly from the rear of the corridor to the door on the left side of the shot and enters through it. After she has entered, the shot lasts for another fifteen seconds with nothing in it, only the sound of her prosthetic leg touching the ground.

Cut to the cinema auditorium where we see fragments of the old Chinese action film onscreen. A door next to the screen, invisible in the darkness, opens – it's the cashier looking up at the screen. She disappears, leaving the door open; a bright light outlines the contours of the door.

Next is a montage sequence between short close-ups of the cashier and action-shots from the Chinese film. The location of the cashier is unclear, it seems she is standing behind the screen.

Complicating action (minutes 31 – 47)

In the shot that starts the complicating action the cashier climbs a spiral stairway, seen from above. She does it slowly and painfully. The shot lingers on her.

In the next shot, which lasts for three minutes, she comes from the background of the poorly lit corridor to the staircase on the right side of the shot and starts to descend (camera slightly reframes). Noise of the running film from not far away.

The next shot is quite unusual for this film, because it's a close-up of a crack in the doors and the cashier looking through it, but there is no reverse shot, so that the audience cannot discover what the cashier is looking at. Instead, the next shot shows a shallow and poorly lit corridor from above where several men pass each other. There are several pans.

Cut to the next shot, where we see the Japanese man in a medium close up standing behind a fence. He turns around. In the next medium long shot the Japanese man approaches a man smoking at the window and makes a tentative move to establish contact, but the man ignores him.

Next shot is slightly from above. It is a dimly lit storeroom, the Japanese man walks across it. In the subsequent shot the Japanese man passes a man in a very narrow corridor with a blue lit window, they can scarcely pass each other because the second man is corpulent.

In the subsequent shot the cashier opens a door; the camera reframes her as she enters. It happens to be the projection room.

The next shot is quite complex and therefore quite unusual for the visual design of the film. At first we notice the laundry hanging over the stairs, casting a shadow on the wall. We hear the

sound of steps. Shortly after the Japanese man comes out of the shadow on the right side of the shot and looks up at a man smoking in the doorway on the second floor (on the far left of the shot). That is followed by a long shot of a man smoking. He turns around and leaves the doorway. The subsequent shot shows him approaching the camera through a shallow corridor. In this poorly lit setting he functions more as a shadow. As he stands and leans towards a wall, we register the Japanese man far behind him, standing by the stairs. Both men stand still, only the working ventilator in the middle of the corridor casts some shadow.

The cashier sits inert in the projection room. The steamed bun she brought lays untouched on the table. We hear the voices and noises from the running film. She takes the bun and leaves.

Another shot of the two men – the Japanese man and the smoker – standing in the corridor, slightly filmed from above. The Japanese man slowly approaches him and, with a nod, asks to light a cigarette. The smoker lights his lighter. This shot is where the first spoken line of this film is said. It is the 44 minute mark of the film. The smoking man asks the Japanese man if he knew that this cinema is haunted by ghosts. The Japanese man doesn't respond. Both men smoke. The Japanese man comes very close to the smoker as if wanting something, but the smoker drops his cigarette and leaves slowly, casting a big shadow on the wall. The other man confesses that he is Japanese. Camera lingers on the Japanese man who gazes after the second man exiting.

Development (minutes 47 - 55)

Cut to the cinema hall. In the background of the shot sits a young woman, who we see for the first time. She cracks nuts. The Japanese man comes into the shot and takes a place in the foreground of the shot. Cut to another perspective of this shot – the camera is positioned slightly above the woman. Her shoe falls off. Only the Japanese man seems to be disturbed by it. The woman continues to eat nuts with her legs hanging over the front seat. Then she climbs over the front row, bows and looks for the shoe on the ground. Cut to a medium shot on the Japanese man watching the film. He turns to look for the girl, but she has disappeared. He turns to the other side, but he cannot find her there either.

A close-up of the Japanese man seen from the left side in a half-profile. He is terrified by the noise of cracking nuts, as the source of the noise is not visible. Then the camera pans to the right and we discover the girl, sitting right behind the Japanese man. The shot ends with a close-up of her watching a movie.

Next shot is from slightly above and behind, with the Japanese man and the girl sitting on the right side of the frame. The Japanese man dares to have a look at the girl. The movie onscreen continues; we hear the voices from the film and the noise of cracking nuts. After some time the

Japanese man stands up in a panic, runs down the rows to the entrance and leaves the cinema. Camera lingers on the scene.

Climax (minutes 55 - 68)

The wide corridor again, bathed with a green and blue light. The cashier comes with a mop to the entrance door of the cinema hall. She looks at her watch. Cut to a very long shot of the cinema hall, we see just two men (seen from behind) watching the film. One of them is the older man (the grandfather), who turns around towards the other man, who is sitting behind him. Cut to a close-up of the grandfather. He turns his face away. This shot is followed by a mid close-up of the other man. In the next shot we see the grandfather (from behind), who is watching an action scene on the big screen. Two short shots of the old Chinese film. They both depict warriors of this sword-film (minute 58). Next shot is a very long shot of the cinema hall from the front. There are still only two viewers in the hall – the grandfather and the other man. A long shot of the cinema hall, seen from behind and above. Onscreen, the action scene continues. Another long shot of the cinema, seen from the left side and behind. A shot of another man watching a film, while a line from the screen is heard: “Lord Tzao, you’ve lost what’s down below, better protect the top”. A close-up of the stranger that lasts for a minute and a half, and at the end of the shot we see tears in his eyes that coincide with the end of the film on the screen (minute 61).

In the next shot the cashier looks through the gap in the curtain from behind the last row. On the screen the closing titles begin to roll.

The next shot reveals the cinema auditorium as seen from the screen, the lights gradually come on. There is no one in the hall. The cashier opens the door on the far right and enters the hall, starts to tidy up, and walks through the cinema tidying up here and there. She leaves on the far left, but the camera still lingers on the empty cinema. The episode lasts for five minutes, and a static shot of the empty cinema once the cashier has left, lasts for two more minutes.

Cut to the wide corridor, grandfather and grandson leave the cinema, cut to another shot – grandfather and grandson pass a closed fence. Cut to the entrance hall of the cinema. The second older man, whom we saw sitting in the cinema, stands in the entrance hall. The grandfather and grandson walk by him. As they pass the stranger, he starts to speak. “Teacher Miao Shah-Chun. Do you come to see a movie?” The grandfather answers that he hasn’t seen a movie for a long time. The stranger says that no one comes to the movies anymore, and that no one remembers them anymore (minute 67). Cut to a still long shot of the two, only the

sound of the pouring rain can be heard.

Epilogue (minute 68 - 80)

Projection room, the projectionist (whom we see for the first time!) bends the filmstrip on the roll while smoking.

Cut to the men's room. The cashier turns the water off at the urinals. Cut to another room (previously unseen). The projectionist carries in a bucket of water, pours it into another one, then goes to a window and pours the water through the window. Then he remains by the window, smoking.

Cashier at the box office. She takes her coat and handbag, looks in the drawer for something, then she takes her two bags and an umbrella, turns off the light and leaves. Through the window of the box office we see her taking out the garbage bag.

Cut to outside the cinema; it's raining. On the wall is an announcement that the cinema is temporarily closed. The cashier throws away the garbage.

Cut to the entrance hall of the cinema. The projectionist rolls down the fence.

In the next shot the projectionist is inside the entrance hall. He smokes by the gambling machine, and then puts some cash into it. It is some kind of fortune teller. Afterwards he goes into the box office to the pot where the steamed bun was cooked. The cashier left it in the box office. Close-up of the pot, which is empty.

Long shot of the entrance of the cinema. The projectionist comes out, gets on his scooter and leaves. It turns out that on the left side of the shot the cashier has been waiting for him. Now she comes to the fore and slowly leaves. Cut to the street. The rain is pouring; the cashier slowly comes from a rear plan. A romantic melody begins to play, contrasting the atmosphere and the darkness of the shot. A female singer sings about the beautiful past, which she cannot let go.

1.6. Implicated conclusions for *Goodbye, Dragon Inn*

As it becomes clear from the description of the shot content of *Goodbye, Dragon Inn*, the visual and aural channels deliver only the bare bones of what might be turned into a plausible plot through the process of implicated conclusions. As Forceville would say:

> Der explizit durch Zeichen vermittelte Inhalt einer Mitteilung, die eine Kommunizierende ihrem Adressaten übermittelt, wird gewöhnlich nicht mehr sein als ein grober Stimulus, über den hinaus der Adressat weitere kognitive Handlungen vollziehen muss, um dessen Relevanz zu erkennen. […] damit eine Mitteilung Relevanz erhält, muss die

Dekodierung stets durch Inferenzbildung vervollständigt werden.[238]

The everyday experiences on which the explicatures and strong implicatures for understanding this film are built upon derive from our experience as cinema goers – about how a visit to a cinema begins, how the projection proceeds and how a screening ends. But it also relies on our knowledge about the opening of a film or its ending.

We can locate the contextual information needed for understanding the film and building implicated conclusions on two levels: the Taiwanese cultural context and the authorial signature of Tsai Ming Liang. Whereas a cinema-educated viewer who is familiar with the output of Tsai Ming-Liang might recognize his favorite cinematic devices or preferred actors, not every cinema-educated viewer has the expertise in Taiwanese cinema culture at his disposal. Thus, not all audience members have the same cognitive environment and consequently not all will arrive at the same conclusions and construct the same story out of the shots. Even more, the conclusions derived can differ enormously, and in this context it is important to once again underline that in the case of art we are operating with non-demonstrative inferences. They cannot be proved or disapproved; they can merely be confirmed or disconfirmed.[239] Therefore also, the contextual implicatures constructed in this research project taking into account the factual contextual information at the author's disposal as well as experience as film viewer, may be thwarted by other researchers who have other cognitive environments and other intertexts available.

1.6.a) References of Taiwanese film culture

The film begins with an off-screen voice narrating the plot of another film, and with some scenes from an older film that the author, as someone with no expertise in Chinese cinema, named as a **old Chinese action film** during the first stage of generating explicatures. Only viewers with specific background knowledge may recognize from these shots that that story is the beginning of the Taiwanese film classic *Dragon Gate Inn* from 1960, directed by King Hu. This film, screened during the whole duration of *Goodbye, Dragon Inn*, represents the genre of martial arts films (*wuxia*). It helps Tsai to connect his Taiwanese identity with the ancient Chinese culture. Tsai perceives these old *wuxia* (martial arts) films as his emotional homeland.[240] But in the context of *Goodbye, Dragon Inn*, the film *Dragon Gate Inn* functions only as a backdrop against which all other storylines develop.

During the second episode of the film, the setting where the action takes place is defined. It

238 Charles Forceville *Relevanz und Prägnanz: Kunst als Kommunikation* in *Zeitschrift für Semiotik*, Vol..31, No 1-2, 2009, p. 50.
239 Warren Buckland *The Cognitive Semiotics of Film,* Cambridge, 2000, p. 85.
240 Ella Raidel *Subversive Realitäten. Tsai Ming-Liang und seine Filme*, Marburg, 2009, p. 95.

is an old cinema, where the old film *Dragon Gate Inn* is being shown. It is the **Fu-Ho Grand Theatre** as we can learn from external sources. Ella Raidel, who has written a doctoral thesis about the director, has discovered that Tsai Ming-Liang found the inspiration for the film in an old Fuhe-cinema on the outskirts of Taipei. It was founded in 1930, and the filmmaker discovered it during the shooting of the film *What Time Is It There?* (2001). Although there were almost no viewers, films were still shown in case someone drops in. The cinema had become a meeting-point for homosexuals. The films onscreen functioned only as an excuse to meet. In his film Tsai recreates the atmosphere of the old theatre and its last days. Thus, on the grounds of this contextual information, an implicated conclusion can be constructed that this cinema has become a place where homosexuals can come to obtain sex, but, mirroring the decay of the cinema theatre, any contact between the gay men is impossible.[241]

Another weak contextual implicature that can only be inferred with suitable contextual information is the interpretation of **the montage sequence** between the cashier and the action-shots from *Dragon Gate Inn* at the end of the setup. This sequence acquires additional meaning, if seen in the context of Chinese cinema history as it has been exemplified by Ella Raidel. In this montage sequence, the main female characters of both films are juxtaposed. The main character of the Tsai's film is a disabled person whereas the swordswoman from the King Hu film flies through the air and defeats the world dominated by men.[242]

The next episode for which the cinematic context is meant to guide the viewer's reasoning procedure comes at the beginning of the climax. There we saw **two older men sitting in the cinema hall**, but the close-ups of these two men are juxtaposed with fragments from *Dragon Gate Inn* and the sentence "Lord Tzao, you've lost what's down below, better protect the top". But only viewers familiar with the Taiwanese film history can recognize that these men sitting in the auditorium are Taiwanese actors Miao Tian, who plays the grandfather, and Chun Shih, who plays himself. They both acted in the Taiwanese film classic *Dragon Gate Inn*, shown on the screen. So, onscreen they encounter themselves as young men. The reference to Taiwanese cinema history as a contextual framework works also for the next episode when we encounter both men meeting at the entrance of the cinema. This episode can be read twofold. First of all, it clearly is a reference to the King Hu film. Secondly, it is a commentary on the actual cinema situation, where no one comes to see films anymore, so that cinemas like the Fuhe cinema are forced to close down. In any case, this episode is a particularly good point in demonstrating that often in a film that is highly dependent on contextual information; the viewer realizes that this is something, some background knowledge needed in order to understand the scene properly. But at the same time the viewer understands that this background information is not available to him during the viewing. It can be compared to a situation of standing behind a closed door and hearing the music playing through it, but you have to have permission to

241 Ella Raidel *Subversive Realitäten. Tsai Ming-Liang und seine Filme*, Marburg, 2009, p. 96.
242 Ibid., p. 99.

enter.

1.6.b)References to Tsai Ming-Liang´s signature

An additional interpretational layer can be constructed if we take into account the filmmaker's signature. The introductory subchapter contained an explanation that, even when referring to a particular filmmaker by name, we actually have the hypothetical filmmaker in mind. For the purposes of this study the concept of the hypothetical filmmaker is very useful as a heuristic tool when defining the communicator of the message. However, although film is a collective art, in the tradition of classical film theory it is seen as more valuable when the signature of a particular author can be traced through thematic and/ or stylistic consistency across his oeuvre.[243] But, as explained above, the concept of the hypothetical filmmaker permits more speculation about the message of a film than the concepts of implied author or filmmaker. Thus, it is more compatible with The Relevance theory stance, which, with the notion of non-demonstrative utterances, allows us to assess the inferences not as true or false, but just as confirmed or disconfirmed with the help of other contextual factors. This circumstance also allows for misinterpretation and plurality of interpretations. But most of a slow cinema audience, all perhaps similarly cinema-educated, will not use such a complicated theoretical concept as hypothetical filmmaker in attributing meaning to a film. Most will use the concept of auteur as described above. All the same though, whether you suppose a real filmmaker is behind the artwork or an implied filmmaker as a theoretical construct, Tsai Ming-Liang is a useful frame of reference. In the tradition of classical film theory, the search for consistencies across his oeuvre is supported by the filmmaker's declarations of his preferences, interests and life experience, which all nourish his unique artistic vision. Thus, whereas in the first part of the analysis Tsai Ming-Liang was referred to as a hypothetical instance, here the classic approach to authorship is used, because it facilitates the building of implicated conclusions and thus facilitates the accessibility of the film's story.

First of all, the subject of Ming-Liang's films can be explained by his interest in the contemporary world and in mundane activities. Tsai Ming-liang comments in another context as follows:

> The reason why I always deal with the present in my films is simply because that´s what I want to show. Things of the present are true, they seem to me totally authentic, they clearly belong to reality. (..) the reason it interests me is above all because I want to show things that are true.[244]

As Tsai Ming-liang registers any mundane activity with his camera and charges it with significance, the viewer has to watch his films very attentively. For example, one might suppose that the running time of the shot with the urinating men in the lavatory is similar to the real

243 John Caughie *Introduction* in John Caughie (ed.) *Theories of Authorship*, London, 1999, p. 9.
244 Danièle Rivière & Tsai Ming-liang *Scouting* in Jean-Pierre Rehm, Olivier Joyard, Danièle Rivière *Tsaï Ming-Liang*, Paris, 1999, p. 103-104.

time needed for urinating. That would correspond to Tsai Ming-Liang's opinion, that "I want the time in my films to be real, just like all the other aspects".[245] In this case, the sequence shot of the urinating men lasts for three minutes. Not only urinating, but also eating, sleeping, and sexual satisfaction in a Tsai Ming-Liang film will last onscreen for the duration it would take in real life. For him, these form the real meaning of our lives. At the same time, such scenes evoke discomfort in the viewer.[246]

The concentration on the mundane as one of the principal features of slow cinema is acknowledged also by other scholars.[247] In any case, if we highlight the showing of dull everyday activities in their entirety as an aesthetic subject of a certain group of films - slow cinema in this case, it prompts the audience to understand these narratives. Forceville expresses the opinion that knowledge of the genre is the most decisive in building contextual assumptions.[248] In the case of slow cinema, other factors such as the filmmaker's name also play an important function, and the type of film has to be taken into account as well.

Another characteristic of Tsai Ming-Liang's work is the use of *temps mort* such as in the sequences when the cashier very slowly crosses a corridor and the camera runs for several seconds after the cashier has left the scene. This shot is similar to other shots in this film, when Tsai Ming-Liang lets the camera run when the action is over. Like in the art cinema films of the 1960s, here we encounter *temps mort*, where nothing happens. Ben Singer names such moments in a film, when the camera lingers on the shot after the action has been completed, as post-action lag. He attributes this device to an anti-Hollywood stance whereby the invisibility of editing disappears and the self-consciousness of the narrative comes to the fore.[249] Flanagan connects this narrative device with late modernist cinema, with the work of Jean-Marie Straub and Daniele Huillet, and Theo Angelopoulos in particular.[250]

This issue is closely connected to the issue of the relationship between Tsai Ming-Liang and his audience. He is very well aware of the burden he puts on the viewers. But, as he states in an interview, he wants the viewer to experience the time that a single action takes.[251] In this regard, his films can be described as documental. Precisely this feature unites all slow cinema

245 Ibid., p. 105.
246 Ella Raidel *Subversive Realitäten. Tsai Ming-Liang und seine Filme*, Marburg, 2009, p. 83.
247 Matthew Flanagan *Slow Cinema: Temporality and Style in Contemporary Art and Experimental Film* , 2012, University of Exeter, p. 103, available at https://ore.exeter.ac.uk/repository/handle/10036/4432 (Accessed May 2013) .
248 Charles Forceville *Relevance Theory as a model for analyzing visual and multimodal communication* in David Machin (ed.) *Visual Communication* [to be published in 2014]. Draft available at http://muldisc.wordpress.com/2013/08/20/relevance-theory-as-model-for-analyzing-visual-and-multimodal-communication/ (Accessed 1.10.2013).
249 Ben Singer *Jeanne Dielman: Cinematic Interrogation and `Amplification`* in *Millennium Film Journal*, 22, 1989, p. 59.
250 Matthew Flanagan: *Slow Cinema: Temporality and Style in Contemporary Art and Experimental Film* , Universitz of Exeter, 2012, p. 96-97, https://ore.exeter.ac.uk/repository/handle/10036/4432, (accessed May 2013).
251 Danièle Rivière, Tsai Ming-Liang *Scouting* in Jean-Pierre Rehm, Olivier Joyard, Danièle Rivière *Tsaï Ming-Liang*, Paris, 1999, p. 107.

films. Each activity taking place onscreen lasts as long as it would in real life, and the audience has to experience it in real time or go through the *temps mort* until the filmmaker chooses to cut.

The actor Miao Tian who plays the grandfather exemplifies another feature characteristic to the narrative style of Tsai Ming-Liang. Tian plays the father in all of Tsai's films until *What Time Is It There* (2001), where his character dies. Therefore, the character played by Tian in *Goodbye, Dragon Inn* can also be interpreted as a ghost. Altogether, all of Tsai's films build a universe with figures travelling from film to film, and quotations and links pointing from one film to others. Thus, a viewer familiar with Tsai's films can make more out of another of his films than others.

As Ella Raidel discovered, the look through a gap in the curtain is a common visual motif in the films of Tsai. The approach to film music, by putting an emotional Taiwanese pop song at the end of the film, is also a common feature of Tsai's cinematic signature. Thus the music expresses feelings and emotions unsaid by the film's protagonists.[252]

De Luca lists in his dissertation several other devices of Tsai's artistic signature such as geometric visual compositions or the rare use of close-ups .[253] Surely, David Bordwell's thesis that the viewer often just forgets facts presented onscreen if they are seemingly not significant for the story acquires a new dimension here, because the question arises how much expertise in Tsai's signature is required in order to understand the story.

1.7. Degree of narrativity in the film

As mentioned in the introductory chapter, in order to understand where to insert a break between acts, both aspects have to be discussed – cognitive pragmatics and the newest developments in postnarratolo gy, and also the decisive role that artistic design plays in building inferences. Because, as mentioned above, the only message attested to be relevant is that which has an effect on the addressee's cognitive environment.[254] According to Sperber and Wilson, this effect could lead to the adoption of new assumptions; the abandonment of old assumptions in favor of the assumptions just communicated; the strengthening of old

252 Ella Raidel *Subversive Realitäten. Tsai Ming-Liang und seine Filme*, Marburg, 2009, p. 91.
253 De Luca, Tiago Magalhães *Realisms of the Senses. Tendency in Contemporary World Cinema*, University of Leeds, 2011, availabe at http://etheses.whiterose.ac.uk/1760/ (accessed May 2013), p. 147, 154.
254 Dan Sperber, Deidre Wilson *Relevance theory* in Laurence R. Horn & Gregory Ward (eds.) *Handbook of Pragmatics,* Oxford, 2004, available at http://www.dan.sperber.fr/?p=93 (Accessed 14.07.2013).

assumptions; or the weakening of old assumptions.[255]

1.7.a) Tellability, exceptionality and staging

First of all, what is obvious from the description of *Goodbye, Dragon Inn* is the question of the filmmaker deciding which activities are worth telling. In narrative theory this issue has been approached under the concept of tellability. Marie-Laure Ryan defines it as "a quality that makes stories inherently worth telling, independently of their textualisation." [256] As Ryan points out, this means that stories exist in a virtual state in the mind of the storyteller before they are turned into texts.[257] As already quoted, Tsai Ming-Liang explains that he wants to show things that are true. But the actions he prefers to film – such as urinating in the lavatory or going from point A to point B – actually belong to the realm of not-tellable or unnarratable. In classic narratives such events would be left out, because they are considered too dull to be mentioned.[258] Ryan leaves the preoccupation with such unnarratable events to the realm of high literature,[259] which is the equivalent of slow cinema.

In any case, in terms of narrative theory the urinating and aimless wandering often might be reproached in lacking exceptionality. In fact, exceptionality has been listed as one of the categories that enable eventfulness. According to Hühn, tellability and narrativity depend on eventfulness.[260] However, Hühn also admits that what is regarded as an event will be assessed by taking into account such contextual factors as genre, culture, social group, historical period and author.[261] Or, as Wolf Schmid puts it, "the concept of eventfulness which characterizes the particular epoch".[262] As mentioned, Tsai belongs to the tradition of art cinema which chooses stories that would not receive any attention in mainstream cinema. Viewers who are familiar with this cinematic tradition would not wonder about Tsai's choice of stories. However, this study regards another aspect as more important - namely, the degree of narrativity of such mundane activities. What is at stake here is what narrative theorists discuss as the concept of change. According to Branigan, we usually presuppose that event A in a film will yield to the consequence B in the same film, because we attest causality to events shown in films grounded

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255 Dan Sperber, Deidre Wilson *Relevance theory* in Laurence R. Horn & Gregory Ward (eds.) *Handbook of Pragmatics,* Oxford, 2004, available at http://www.dan.sperber.fr/?p=93 (Accessed 14.07.2013).
256 Marie-Laure Ryan *Tellability* in David Herman, Manfred Jahn, and Marie-Laure Ryan (eds.) *Routledge Encyclopedia of Narrative Theory*, London, 2005, p. 589.
257 Ibid., p. 589.
258 Robyn Warhol *The Unnarratable* in David Herman, Manfred Jahn, and Marie-Laure Ryan (eds.) *Routledge Encyclopedia of Narrative Theory*, London, 2005, p. 623.
259 Marie-Laure Ryan *Tellability* in David Herman, Manfred Jahn, and Marie-Laure Ryan (eds.) *Routledge Encyclopedia of Narrative Theory*, London, 2005, p. 590.
260 Peter Hühn *Functions and Forms of Eventfulness in Narrative Fiction* in John Pier, Ángel Garcia Landa (eds.) *Theorizing Narrativity*, Berlin, 2011, p. 145.
261 Ibid., p. 148.
262 Wolf Schmid *Narrativity and Eventfulness* in Tom Kindt, Hans-Harald Müller (eds.) *What Is Narratology? Questions and Answers Regarding the Status of a Theory*, Berlin, 2003, p. 25.

in our cinema experience and our social interactions.[263] However, in the case of *Goodbye, Dragon Inn* we cannot always easily make out the causal connections between the events. The case example here is the staging of the narrative theme of the cashier's love towards the projectionist, which is an overreaching story in the film. For an inattentive viewer this story line may remain unnoticed until the very end of the film when we witness the cashier spying on the projectionist closing down the cinema. It is so, because as the symbol for her unrequited love Tsai has chosen a steamed bun. At the beginning of the film it is cooked, the cashier wraps it in and carries through the cinema's labyrinthine corridors and stairs until she reaches the projection room. But there are no close-ups of the bun, which would underscore its meaning for the story. All the scenes with the bun are filmed in long shots, which makes the noticing of this important detail hard work. Thus, the handling of this theme exemplifies the fact that for a definition of narrative, causal relationships are decisive, and, in the case of visual track, are not explicit. Even more, as Ryan rightly notes, in visual narrative the causal relationships between shots have to be inferred by the viewer.[264]

The question of relevance can therefore be posed again. Namely, if there is a theme, it is intended to be noticed. But, if it is meant to further develop the storyline on unrequited love, it is hardly noticeable during the first viewing of the film. Thus, might we conclude that additional viewings of a film were intended by the filmmaker?

As all the shots depicting this story are large scale, the steamed bun in the hands of the cashier may remain unnoticed. The viewer instead sees only the cashier's endless and slow wanderings through the cinema, which would seem totally aimless. Thus, the eventfulness of an event is closely connected to the staging strategies of the director.

Two concluding remarks on the steamed bun have to be made. First of all, Tsai's choice to make such a tiny detail a metaphor for a love story also differentiates him from mainstream cinema. Secondly, to stage such an important subject by actually hiding it somewhere in the long shot so that it is completely up to the audience to notice this detail and, consequently, the storyline connected with it, indicates just how much confidence Tsai has in his audience. In terms of Relevance theory - in this case the weak narrativity has actually been built in by the filmmaker himself. Thus, we cannot declare definitely that the filmmaker is only responsible for strong explicatures and implicatures, whereas the responsibility for weak implicatures relies completely on the receiver. The divided responsibility for strong and weak implicatures is obviously much more nuanced, as acknowledged by the Relevance theory.

And secondly: the recognition of the steamed bun is culture-specific knowledge, because for

263 Edward Branigan *Towards a Pragmatics of Narrative* in Jürgen Müller (ed.) *Towards a Pragmatics of the Audiovisual*. Vol. 2, Muenster, 1995, p. 48.
264 Marie-Laure Ryan *On the theoretical Foundations of Transmedial Narratology* in Jan Christoph Meister (ed.) *Narratology beyond Literary Criticism. Mediality, Disciplinarity*, Berlin, 2005, p. 10.

someone without expertise in Taiwanese cuisine it remains unclear until further reading on the different paratexts in the film. The claim herein is that not only an attentive viewing mode, but also knowledge in Taiwanese culture is needed in order to understand this storyline. Thus, although in film studies we usually speak about the universal nature of images – surely, most people would agree on the wide range of what is represented. From the point of view of cognitive sciences, however, such cognitive elements as encoding of the discourse, levels of elaborative thought, inference, imagination, and appraisal are a matter of cultural particularity. As demonstrated above, we can all agree broadly on what *Goodbye, Dragon Inn* is about, but in order to understand all the details and the author's implications, specific, culturally coded knowledge is required.[265]

1.7.b) Eventfulness, duration and emotion

In the introduction an opinion was expressed that in this kind of film we have to take into account the fact that different events can have different degrees of narrativity – Peter Hühn names it eventfulness. Different degrees of eventfulness can be assessed through the following list of criteria. Two absolute preconditions of eventfulness are reality and resultativity.[266] Obviously, the events taking place within the fictional world of *Goodbye, Dragon Inn* are real within its limits and have a result. Also, five other gradational criteria listed by Schmid can be more or less attested to the story world of *Goodbye, Dragon Inn*: relevance, unpredictability, persistence, irreversibility and non-iterativity.[267] But this study would still like to draw attention to two factors – that of resultativity and of unpredictability.

Schmid concludes that we can speak of resultativity when "the change of state that constitutes an event is neither inchoative (begun) nor conative (attempted) nor durative (confined to an ongoing process). Rather, it must be resultative in that it reaches completion in the narrative world of the text."[268]

As stressed again and again during the description of the events in the film, a lot of activities are shown in their entire duration, starting with the fact that the film *Goodbye, Dragon Inn* coincides more or less with the projection time of the film *Dragon Gate Inn*. Also, the cashier's wanderings through the cinema seem to be shown in their entirety. The claim herein is that such an approach to the staging of an activity also diminishes the degree of narrativity of an event. By comparison, in a mainstream film we usually see how a character departs from point A, and then comes a cut to the next shot where we witness the character arriving at the point

265 Patrick Colm Hogan *Affective Narratology: The Emotional Structure of Stories*, Lincoln and London, 2011, p. 103.
266 Wolf Schmid *Narrativity and Eventfulness* in Tom Kindt, Hans-Harald Müller (eds.) *What Is Narratology? Questions and Answers Regarding the Status of a Theory*, Berlin, 2003, p. 24.
267 Ibid., p. 24 – 29.
268 Ibid., p. 24

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Thus, the duration (often in the form of a long take) is the enemy of strong narrativity. But if these takes depicting the whole process of how something happens exemplify weak narrativity, then what happens with the *temps mort* (post-action lag) shots? The conventional line of thought would be that in such moments the narrative comes to a halt as defined by Chatman[269]. But this study claims that in such cases the affective dimension also has to be taken into account. A particular example is the long shot of the empty cinema hall which lasts for about three minutes after the screening of *Dragon Gate Inn* has ended. In this part of the episode not only nothing happens, but it depicts a completely empty room with no discernable changes. But, within the overall story of the decline of a formerly prestigious cinema, an emotional peak is reached at this moment. Although a film always operates on two levels – the quantitative and the affective-motivational –[270], this episode is the best example of a need for more than cognitive abilities in order to comprehend a story.

Although the Relevance theory has been criticized for not acknowledging the importance of affective responses in the comprehension procedure, the back door of the Relevance theory that permits the incorporation of this aspect is the notion of poetic effect. Poetic effect is the effect generated by the utterances which achieve "most of its relevance through a wide array of weak implicatures"[271] and such utterances "create … sense of apparently affective rather than cognitive mutuality"[272]. The poetic effects "create common impression rather than common knowledge".[273] As literal scholar Adrian Pilkington has argued, the affective dimension is central to what is expressed and communicated via poetic effects.[274] His thesis goes along with the suggestion of Nigel Fabb that affective mutuality might form the basis of a more general account of the aesthetic experience.[275]

In describing such phenomena as emotional responses, evaluative attitudes, impressions of intensity, profundity, sublimity, awareness of epiphanies, poetic experience and aesthetic pleasure, Fabb suggests the use of the term Response (with a capital R).[276] Fabb goes on to explain that "Response is composed of mental relations rather than mental representations."[277] Even more, he acknowledges that these mental relations cannot be articulated, thus posing a

269 Seymour Chatman *Story and Discourse: Narrative Structure in Fiction and Film*, Ithaca, 1978, p. 42.
270 Torben Grodal *Emotions, Cognitions, and Narrative Patterns in Film* in Carl Plantinga, Greg M. Smith (eds.) *Passionate Views: Film, Cognition, and Emotion*, Baltimore, 1999, p.128.
271 Dan Sperber, Deidre Wilson *Relevance. Communication and Cognition*, 2ed edition, Oxford, 1995, p. 222.
272 Ibid., p. 224.
273 Ibid., p. 224.
274 Adrian Pilkington *Poetic Effects: A Relevance Theory Perspective*, Amsterdam, 2000, p. 191.
275 Adrian Pilkington *Poetic Effects: A Relevance Theory Perspective*, Amsterdam, 2000, p. 165.
276 Nigel Fabb *The Density of Response: A Problem for Literary Criticism and Cognitive Science* in J.Payne & J.Wheatley (eds.) *Linguistic Approaches to Literature. Papers in Literary Stylistics*, Birmingham, 1995, p. 144.
277 Nigel Fabb *The Density of Response: A Problem for Literary Criticism and Cognitive Science* in J.Payne & J.Wheatley (eds.) *Linguistic Approaches to Literature. Papers in Literary Stylistics*, Birmingham, 1995, p. 155..

problem for literary criticism.[278]

In any case, the concept of Response offered by Fabb facilitates to encompass the emotional and affective dimensions[279] of cinematic experience. Obviously, all films are designed to elicit particular emotions.[280] Until now in this case study the concern was only with the cognitive processes involved in film comprehension, because it fosters the analysis of the act structure of the film. However, as Plantinga rightly remarks, affective experience and meaning always firmly intertwine[281] and the episode with the empty cinema hall makes the bringing in of the film theory of emotions inevitable, although this new parameter will complicate this study to a certain extent.

1.7.c) Arresting image, redefined

To conclude the discussion of the episode with the empty cinema hall - a reference to the notion of the arresting image as developed by Barbara Klinger. These are shots with striking visuals that stop or slow down the forward motion of the narrative, and allow the spectacle to fully capture the attention of the audience.[282] In the case of slow cinema it would be an exaggeration to speak about visually ravishing images. Instead, the visual style of not only *Goodbye, Dragon Inn*, but also of most other slow cinema representatives is characterized as "frugally rough-edged",[283] reaching even total visual austerity. Thus, the notion of an arresting image has to be reconsidered in relation to slow cinema. But the faculty of an arresting image, which is also true for slow cinema, is its ability to form the focal point for emotions, although it does not provide sure resolution or catharsis.[284] This study can concur with her statement that:

> The art film's arresting image delivers the kind of experience such audiences expect from a form that tries to rise above mass culture: it exposes them to an intense perceptual moment not immediately comprehensible in terms of narrative function or theme, yet oddly touching or emotionally compelling.[285]

This particular episode exemplifies that emotionally laden episodes with no clear narrative

278 Nigel Fabb *The Density of Response: A Problem for Literary Criticism and Cognitive Science* in J.Payne & J.Wheatley (eds.) *Linguistic Approaches to Literature. Papers in Literary Stylistics*, Birmingham, 1995, p. 155.
279 In making this distinction I follow Carl Plantinga who defines an emotion as intentional mental state or "concern-based construal" and affecting bodily states. See Carl Plantinga *Moving Viewers: American Film and the Spectator´s Experience*, Berkeley, 2009, p. 54, 57.
280 Carl Plantinga *Moving Viewers: American Film and the Spectator´s Experience*, Berkeley, 2009, p. 79.
281 Carl Plantinga *Moving Viewers: American Film and the Spectator´s Experience*, Berkeley, 2009, p. 3.
282 Barbara Klinger *The art film, affect and the female viewer:* The Piano *revised* in *Screen* 47:1, Spring 2006, p. 24.
283 Jonathan Romney *In Search of Lost Time* in *Sight & Sound*, February 2010, p. 43.
284 Barbara Klinger *The art film, affect and the female viewer:* The Piano *revised* in *Screen* 47:1, Spring 2006, p. 24.
285 Barbara Klinger *The art film, affect and the female viewer:* The Piano *revised* in *Screen* 47:1, Spring 2006, p. 30.

meaning – episodes with very weak narrativity – can still have an effect on the cognitive environment of the viewer because of their emotional content, and thus we can allocate relevance to it. But in noting that the viewer is responsible for the reactions elicited by weak narrative moments, we cannot predict here which particular emotions this episode elicits. It could be quite a wide range, reaching from sadness about the condition of the cinema as an art form to total boredom, because "nothing happens" onscreen. A more profound insight on slow cinema and emotions will be given in the chapter about the film *Blissfully Yours*, but for the time being it has to be noted that the generation of emotional responses to a film is not always closely tied to character development and the reaching of his goals. This finding delivers another proof for cinema scholar Carl Plantinga, who holds that the overall narrative organization of a film is accountable for eliciting emotions, not just the main characters of the film.[286]

1.7.d) A topsy-turvy of kernels and satellites

Another observation made from *Goodbye, Dragon Inn* has to be discussed explicitly. Namely, that Tsai often does not prioritize the events according to their relevance for the narrative. Seymour Chatman proposes to approach this issue by defining kernels and satellites. According to the logic of classic narrative, kernels are major events that are part of the chain or armature of contingency.[287] A satellite is a minor plot event that can be deleted without destroying the logic of the plot.[288] In *Goodbye, Dragon Inn* this narrative hierarchy cannot be discovered right away – for example, it takes several very attentive film viewings until one realizes that the film's plot actually consists of five themes, and only then the right kernels can be separated from the satellites.

Once again, returning to the example of the steamed bun, but contrasting it to the episode when the Japanese tourist, terrified by the woman cracking nuts, runs out of the cinema. The second one is a quite obvious event of a higher degree of narrativity - not only without everyday experience would we all be afraid of ghosts, but also, in comparison to the steamed bun, this theme is designed with much more explicitness. There are close-ups and medium shots of the Japanese man in order for us to witness his reactions and growing despair.

Even more explicit than shot sequences designed to transport very explicit message, the verbal information which accompanies this theme delivers even more clarity. Although verbal communication is very rare in this film, but, when it comes, it clearly serves as a turning point or indicates or facilitates the turning point. These are, for example, the sentences where it is

286 Carl Plantinga *Moving Viewers: American Film and the Spectator's Experience*, Berkeley, 2009, p. 88, 150.
287 Seymour Chatman *Story and Discourse: Narrative Structure in Fiction and Film*, Ithaca, 1978, p. 53.
288 Ibid., p. 54.

stated that the cinema is haunted and that nobody goes to the cinema anymore. Clearly, verbal utterances are often more explicit than visual ones. But still, if only verbal utterances would possess explicitness and would generate explicatures, then, as Forceville rightly remarks, no visual evidence in documentary film as well as in court would be possible.[289]

The elaboration on the different degrees of narrativity in the film *Goodbye, Dragon Inn* is also a particularly good example for Sperber and Wilson's thesis that "Stylistic differences are just differences in the way relevance is achieved."[290] The way in which Tsai delivers utterances to the viewers – by confusing the kernels with satellites, by hiding important story details in long shots, by emphasizing the importance of the background information for the understanding of the story – generates his signature.

1.8. Characters in the film

In the introductory chapter a position was expressed that the concept of the character in a story may directly influence the degree of narrativity. In *Goodbye, Dragon Inn* we encounter no rounded characters that facilitate the identification process, which is the basis of our experience with narrative films.[291] Instead, we experience the characters only from the distance and only through their deeds, very seldom through dialogues. Although, after repeated viewings, it is possible to state the goals and motivation for their actions, they completely differ from those of mainstream cinema. Nobody has to save the world in these slow films. On the contrary, every single small and ordinary activity is worth showing, although from first glance the aim may remain unclear.

In the case of *Goodbye, Dragon Inn*, there is only one character present during the whole film – the cashier. Her presence alone ties all the different storylines together, as she travels through the cinema during the film screening. But we do not acquire any information about her. We might conclude that she is in love with the projectionist from the last shot of the film as we see her staring at him. Only after seeing this last scene of the film, the whole storyline of her unrequited love comes to the fore. Namely, the scene at the beginning of the film where the cashier picks up a steamed bun and brings a part of it into the projectionist's room acquires new significance. The narrative construction of this theme demonstrates how minimalistic a storyline in slow cinema film can be. Tsai uses just three episodes throughout the whole film (minute 9, minutes 11-16 and minute 42) filmed using the long shot. To follow the storyline, the viewer has to scan the shot meticulously and be aware that every activity in the shot could

289 Charles Forceville *Relevance Theory as a model for analyzing visual and multimodal communication* in David Machin (ed.) *Visual Communication* [to be published in 2014]. Draft available at http://muldisc.wordpress.com/2013/08/20/relevance-theory-as-model-for-analyzing-visual-and-multimodal-communication/ (Accessed 1.10.2013).
290 Dan Sperber, Deidre Wilson *Relevance. Communication and Cognition,* 2ed edition, Oxford, 1995, p. 224.
291 Murray Smith *Engaging Characters: Fiction, Emotion, and the Cinema*, Oxford, 1995, p. 1.

lead to a storyline, which could be developed further only after a long stretch of film.

The second figure that appears throughout two-thirds of the film is the Japanese tourist. His goals remain unclear. In fact, he tries to establish contact with other audience members in the old cinema, but whether he wishes a sexual encounter is uncertain. With his aimless walking through the cinema he connects with other figures in Tsai's films.

However, for a cinema-educated viewer it may become clear during the first half of the film that this man is one of the principal characters of the film, because he is depicted quite often.

The actor Miao Tian functions on two levels. As a fictional character he is a ghost from other films of Tsai, but at the same time he represents himself as an actor from the glorious days of the *wuxia* films, and as such a reference point for Taiwanese film history.

Actor Chun Shih actually plays himself and functions merely as a symbol of the old cinema that nobody watches anymore. But, as already underlined above, this character's function may remain a mystery for the audience with no additional knowledge of Taiwanese cinema.

The projectionist appears only at minute 68 of the film, and we get no more information about him. He closes the cinema and leaves, so the audience can only guess that he has no love interest in the cashier. Clearly, with the introduction of the projectionist the story goes in a new direction. Now he and his mundane actions at the end of his last working day are at the centre of the story.

Carl Plantinga discerns between sympathetic and distanced narratives. The first kind of this narrative discourse suggests closeness to central characters and the viewer is invited to respond mostly with sympathy for them.[292] On the contrary, distanced narratives avoid such closeness. Instead they favour a more distanced, critical, sometimes humorous, and even cynical perspective and one that encourages critical judgment.[293] As *Goodbye, Dragon Inn* displays its characters through creating detachment in the audience, this film also belongs to the distanced narratives category. Even more, as no strong bonds are built between the characters and the audience, this is a case example for Plantinga, who holds that the overall design of the film's narrative is accountable for eliciting emotions rather than the lack of response to any particular character.[294]

As already mentioned, Kristin Thompson takes the character's goals as a heuristic tool for detecting the turning points and for identifying the acts of the film. As demonstrated above, the goals of the figures in this slow cinema example can remain neglected; therefore it isn't possible to use them as heuristic tools. Instead, the concept of turning points as an unusual

292 Carl Plantinga *Moving Viewers: American Film and the Spectator´s Experience*, Berkeley, 2009, p. 170-171.
293 Ibid., p. 171, 191.
294 Carl Plantinga *Moving Viewers: American Film and the Spectator´s Experience*, Berkeley, 2009, p. 150.

event in the storyline seems more appropriate for films that represent slow narration.

1.9. Act schemata in *Goodbye, Dragon Inn*

At the beginning of the analysis a goal was set to explore whether some kind of act structure can be traced in slow cinema. The analysis of the degree of narrativity in the film *Goodbye, Dragon Inn* leads to the following conclusions.

As indicated above, the narrative of *Goodbye, Dragon Inn* consists of five parts. The setup is unusually long, but it seems to be characteristic of slow cinema, and can be explained with the slow narrative pace of the film. It is followed by a complicating action, a development, a climax, and a closing with an epilogue.

In the setup the main storylines are established – it is the unhappy love of the cashier towards the projectionist which lasts for the whole film. As may be concluded from the explicatures and implicatures, each of the remaining four parts of the story are devoted to another theme: that of the cinema as a place for homosexual encounters (complicating action), that of the haunted cinema (development), that of the cinema as a time gone by (climax), and that of the closing down of the cinema by the projectionist (epilogue). In mainstream cinema all of the stories (themes) developed in the film would be present throughout the film, but in *Goodbye, Dragon Inn*, they come up in turns. After discovering that the film's plot is actually built on several themes, it becomes clearer where to look for the act breaks, and where turning points can be located.

As stated in the introduction, events in slow cinema can be called events when their eventfulness is manifested on the discourse level. In the case of *Goodbye, Dragon Inn*, some of the act breaks are caused by turning points that turn out to be on the discourse level, and not according to story development.

This is the case in the first episode in the film, at the end of the setup. It is the montage sequence between the close-up of the cashier and the shots from the Taiwanese cinema classic *Dragon Gate Inn*. The location of the cashier is unclear, it seems that she is standing behind the screen and looking up. The dramatic music from *Dragon Gate Inn*, full of tension, underscores this shot-reverse-shot sequence. This sequence stands out from the whole film, because the cutting style and the music create tension, which has not been built up by any of the previous shots as would befit a Hollywood film. In mainstream film, this dramatic tension would also be justified as a turning point of the story. For the narrative pattern of this particular film, this sequence stands out and even looks peculiar. The viewer has to construct a meaning for it that would either justify the dramatic tension (according to the schemata of realism) or interpret it as an author's comment. One might think, this sequence leads to new developments or reveals

some new information, but this is not the case. Stylistically it is a turning point, because it differs from the rest of the film in terms of its artistic design (shot- reverse-shot). The cutting pattern, short and fast, is similar to that of *Dragon Gate Inn*, but for *Goodbye, Dragon Inn*, it is very strange and forms a contrast to the rest of the film. On the level of the narrative, it introduces no shift in the storylines. So it is just a stylistical turning point and a clear example that in slow cinema, a turning point can also be defined with no connections to character development or goals. Through its unusual style this sequence serves to wake the viewer from lethargy (or immersion), and to renew interest in the film.

After multiple viewings it becomes clear that this sequence closes the setup, because each of the next three parts of the film are dedicated to another theme, with the storyline of the cashier occurring throughout the film.

Conversely, the turning point in the complicating action that precedes an inserted act break is an episode with a very important verbal utterance. Namely, the dialogue between the Japanese man and the smoking man at minute 44 of the film. The smoking man asks the Japanese man if he knows that this cinema is haunted by ghosts, and the Japanese man confesses his nationality. This dialogue has several functions. On one hand, it charges the film with a new meaning, which was not obvious from previous shots – that the cinema is haunted. This casts a new light on all the previous scenes, because it makes the viewer feel insecure about the earlier episodes. What was real and what was haunted? It builds a turning point of the story. This dialogue comes almost precisely at the midway point of the film and divides it into two parts (minute 44 out of 86 minutes). In this case the structure of *Goodbye, Dragon Inn*, with the turning point of the complicating action at the midway of the film, corresponds to the Hollywood models analysed by Kristin Thompson. She states that at the middle of the film is a centrally located turning point, which is as equal as the other turning points.[295]

In any case, the complicating action of *Goodbye, Dragon Inn* also exemplifies Kristin Thompson's statement that this part of the film "serves as a sort of counter-setup, building a whole new situation with which the protagonist must cope."[296] In this case – the confession about the haunting gives the story a new twist.

The development is the act in the film that exemplifies the theme of the haunted cinema, which was brought up at the end of the previous act. Actually, the development consists of only one episode, where we watch how the Japanese man becomes more and more terrified by the lady cracking nuts in the cinema – the episode lasts for approximately seven minutes. Hence, in slow cinema we cannot speak of acts having approximately the same range of length. The placement of this act breaks seems justifiable because, as the Japanese man leaves the cinema, he leaves not only the building, but also the story world. Thus, this storyline receives

295 Kristin Thompson *Storytelling in the New Hollywood. Understanding Classical Narrative Technique*, Cambridge, Mass., 1999. p. 31.
296 Ibid., p. 28.

closure.

In the climax, the turning point begins and takes some time to build up. This is a clear example of Kristin Thompson noting that the turning point can also last for quite a stretch of time. In this act we see two older men watching the film *Dragon Gate Inn* and, after the film has ended, we witness the empty cinema hall and the meeting of both men in front of the cinema entrance. Taking into account our cinema-going experience and the contextual information about Taiwanese cinema history, the story line of the cinema's glorious days gone by come to closure, as exemplified, for example, by the visual juxtaposition. When the film began we saw a cinema full of viewers, but at the end of the film it's empty. It is a visual metaphor for the state of cinema – people used to go to the cinema, but today films play onscreen with no viewers in the auditorium. The dialogue between the former cinema stars underlines this change – no one comes to the movies and no one remembers them. This line spoken by the actor brings this theme to an end. But this part is followed by an epilogue. It is quite lengthy and actually covers a new theme (the closing down of the cinema) and brings in a new character (the projectionist), and for this study's purposes it deserves to be treated as a separate act.

At the moment when the cashier comes out of the darkness to witness the projectionist leaving and the melodramatic song starts, the love story acquires closure and the film reaches the end (which, as H. Porter Abbott rightly remarks, do not have to coincide.[297]). This scene answers the final question of the film – what was the cashier's story – and the romantic music underlines the atmosphere of unfulfilled love. Thus, we as audience conclude that the film has come to an end even before the closing titles start to roll.

Goodbye, Dragon Inn demonstrates that the notion of turning points as used by Thompson has to be redefined. Aesthetic devices (close-ups, length of the shot) that considerably differ in their use from the rest of the film also function as a sort of game-changers, and separate the acts. Even more, with this new understanding of turning points, there shouldn't be any issue in regards to putting act breaks in totally arbitrary places. This outcome from the analysis of *Goodbye Dragon Inn* fuels interest in whether this new definition holds true in other case studies in the chapters to come.

297 H. Porter Abbott *Closure* in David Herman, Manfred Jahn, and Marie-Laure Ryan (eds.) *Routledge Encyclopedia of Narrative Theory*, London, 2005, p. 65- 66.

2. *Liverpool* (dir. Lisandro Alonso, Argentina, 2008) – presence as an effect of minimalism

The film selected for the second case study is *Liverpool* by the Argentinian filmmaker Lisandro Alonso, who has been prized as one of the most accomplished and original contemporary filmmakers from Latin America.[298] He made his debut film *La Libertad* in 2001, and *Liverpool* is his fourth of five feature length films. His name is one of the most frequently mentioned in regards to slow cinema. No wonder, because the stories he chooses to tell are sparse narratives framed mainly in long shots of extended duration. At the same time his unique cinematic vision can also be subsumed under minimalism and, as will be shown, there is no contradiction between slow cinema and minimalism. Slow cinema may even be regarded as an umbrella term for different artistic approaches. For example, the case studies of the films *The Turin Horse* and *Fallen* will be dedicated to the parametric mode of cinema narration.

This chapter will put forward the argument that minimalism is an artistic approach defined by the concepts of tellability and narrativity, and attempt to analyse the film *Liverpool* as a particular case in point.

The chapter is structured as follows: the history of the notion of minimalism and the similarities between slow cinema and minimalism, followed by a description of the structure of *Liverpool* in its duration. The second part of the chapter is an analysis of the film along the lines of concepts such as tellability, levels of narrative, the dominant and the spectator's expectations. The examination of these concepts will explain how minimalism functions as approached from the point of view of narrative theory and comprehension, and what consequences it has for the search for relevance of an event. Then the findings about the act structure of the film, which continue to support the observations made during the analysis of *Goodbye, Dragon Inn,* will be looked at. However, concerning the description of the film´s structure, it is important to stress that *Liverpool* doesn't contain any complicating action, only a set-up, a development, a climax and quite a long epilogue. *Liverpool* consists mainly of long shots that are often static. Similarly to *Goodbye, Dragon Inn*, often a shot equals an episode in this film.

This chapter will conclude with a discussion of the issue of presence - in slow films other strategies of experiencing art are also at work, not only the spectator´s search for relevance or interpretation of an utterance. Thus there will be a departure from pure structural analysis of film´s narrative, which is actually the main intention herein. However, as stressed in the introductory part of the project, every artistic decision is made in order to achieve certain effects. As it will be demonstrated, in *Liverpool* the realm of weak implicatures becomes so unpredictable that at certain points the plot gives way to other, non-narrative strategies in order to facilitate the artistic experience.

298 *No Man´s Land – The Cinema of Lisandro Alonso*, Harvard Film Archive, http://hcl.harvard.edu/hfa/films/2009octdec/alonso.html (accessed 05.11.2013).

2. 1. Minimalism and slow cinema

In order to demonstrate the consequences of minimalism for the process of coming to grips with slow cinema, this artistic approach must first be defined. As Sandra Berchtel observes in her book about minimalism in literature and film, quite disparate phenomena are subsumed under this notion. Thus it is mandatory to always specify in which discipline it is used. However, what unites them all is the emphasis on the essential and, consequently, as a certain form of abstraction.[299] In case of the cinema it is an aesthetic approach favouring long takes, eschewing of cuts, motionless characters and minimal action that all enable deceleration.[300] Clearly these features are very close to the characteristics of slow cinema, and thus it is not surprising that the effect achieved on the viewer through minimalism as well as slow cinema is the same – the freedom of imagination.[301] In looking for the historical roots of this approach in film history, Berchtel partly names the same artists of the avant-garde as Flanagan did in his search for the ancestors of slow cinema. She mentions representatives of structural film such as Andy Warhol, but also enlarges the field by naming different representatives of the international avant-garde such as Sylvina Boissonnas (France), Lutz Mommartz (Germany), James Benning (USA), among others. She also discovers a tendency towards minimalism in arthouse cinema, and puts Chantal Akermann, Alexander Sokurov, Fred Kelemen, Bela Tarr and Sarunas Bartas on her list. Berchtel completes the list with representatives of the so-called Berlin School (Henner Winckler, Jan Krüger, Angela Schanlec, Chrisoph Hochhäuser, Benjamin Heisenberg, Christian Petzold and Thomas Arslan), and the artists working for the Austrian production company *coop 99* (Jessica Hausner, Barbara Albert) as members of this artistic tendency in German-speaking countries.[302] This study's position is that the enlarging of the list of names, as expressed in the introductory chapter in regards to establishing the notion of slow cinema, clarifies less than might be expected as the artistic approaches of these filmmakers are quite diverse. It seems rather that we should only work with a very general description of minimalism as offered within the three sentences above. Secondly, it is more useful to address a particular example and scrutinize how the minimalism comes about in this particular case. Thus, on to the description of the film *Liverpool*.

2.2. Description of the film´s structure

The setup (minutes 1 - 33)

A very dark shot with two seated men playing computer games, with a third (in a white t-shirt) behind them, out of focus. The third man stands up and leaves. As we will later get to know, this third man is Farrel, the main character of the film.

299 Sandra Berchtel *Die Kunst der Reduktion. Minimalismus in Literatur und Film,* Saarbrücken, 2008, p. 6.
300 Ibid., p. 31.
301 Ibid., p. 33.
302 Ibid., p. 38-39.

Cut to the next episode - Farrel looks for food in the cupboard. In the next shot he is still searching for something in another room; he finds a package of milk (?) and slices a sausage. In the next shot he passes by the cupboard.

Cut to a new scene. Two mechanics in an engine room. One tells the other to check the rudder's oil level at the stern. As the mechanic walks through the ship he discovers Farrel sleeping between the pipes and chases him away (2 shots).

Farrel takes his coat from the wardrobe and leaves. In the next shot he paints a piece of metal with red colour. As per a colleague's suggestion, he goes to get some coffee. Next shot is on the deck of a container ship; Farrel comes out onto the deck and looks over the rail. On the bridge; the captain enters. From the sailors we learn that they still have seven hours to sail till Ushuaia. Farrel sits at the helm of the ship. He asks the captain permission for a shore leave at Ushuaia because he wants to visit his relatives – he hasn't seen his mother for years, he doesn´t even know if she is still alive (min. 9 of the film). Farrel also mentions that his mother lives next to the sawmill. A very long shot of the cargo ship sailing through the water. The sun is shining. Farrel in his cabin. He puts on his overalls and his coat, sits on his bed, seems to be lost in thougth – these activities are filmed in their entire duration.

On the deck at night. Farrel smokes, flickering lights from the shore (out of focus) in the background (two shots of Farrel from different angles). Long shot of the harbour. Cut to Farrel still on deck, but the ship is now in the harbour. Farrel gathers up some pieces of metal from the deck, but this is hardly discernible as the shot is very dark.

Cut to Farrel´s cabin. He enters with a towel in hand, seemingly right from the shower. As he is wearing a white shirt, we can infer that he is preparing to leave. He packs his bag. He puts a bottle of vodka in his bag after taking a gulp from it (as the film develops, this becomes a running gag). He also puts socks in the bag and dons a coat. Then he looks around as if to check that he hasn't forgotten anything, switches off the light and leaves.

On deck Farrel registers in a journal and leaves. In darkness, Farrel heads down the stairs, a cold wind is blowing. In the next shot he departs even further from the ship. From now on the shots tend to be longer as the action on the ship and in most episodes consisted of two shots. An abandoned spot behind a house with garbage strewn about on the snow. Farrel takes a smaller bag out of the bigger one and repacks. He also takes a gulp from his vodka bottle. Then he hides the big bag behind some boards and heads off. The next shot is a short one depicting Farrel standing on the street in the night. Farrel eats at a table in a canteen with a large wildlife mural depicting autumn woods behind him. He takes a clandestine gulp from his bottle of vodka and also pours some into his glass of beer.

In the first shot we see two sparsely dressed women sitting at a bar, but the following shot

suggests that this could be Farrel's subjective view – he sits at a table and watches a striptease performance that can be observed from the shadows on the wall.

The next morning, Farrel is asleep in an old, abandoned bus. A close-up of him for a minute and a half as he wakes up. Another 1.5 minute long shot as he swigs from the vodka bottle, smokes and looks through the window. A pan over the harbour follows Farrel passing the containers.

In the next shot Farrel asks a trucker if a truck is going to Tolhuin. The driver suggests that someone at Pastoriza's might be going in that direction. Farrel also asks if the way to the sawmill is open and gets a positive answer.

Farrel arrives at the canteen. In the first shot he warms his hands at the stove in the corridor. In the next one he drinks a cup of coffee in the canteen. Men are playing cards; a girl is also waiting for the truck. As we hear it arriving, the girl stands up and leaves, Farrel follows her. The episode lasts for almost four minutes – a minute for the first shot and almost three for the second.

The girl and Farrel arrive at the flatbed truck. The girl sits in the cabin; Farrel climbs onto the back of the truck and sits down on some logs. Exceptionally, this episode is filmed using a moving camera (long shot). Farrel has now found transportation that not only will bring him home, but will also carry on the story.

Development (minutes 33 - 48)

Cut to the next shot – a medium long shot - Farrel and another man drive through the winter landscape. The lorry stops, the man climbs off. As the vehicle sets in motion, the camera reframes the landscape. The landscape scene could be interpreted as Farrel's subjective view, but after a minute the camera pans to the left and we discover Farrel sitting on the logs. He seems frozen, so he takes his vodka bottle out and takes a gulp. The trip lasts for altogether two and a half minutes.

Cut to a static, very long shot of a winter landscape draped in afternoon sun. In the far distance, the lorry approaches. As the vehicle reaches the foreground of the frame, it stops and Farrel steps out of the cabin. Cut to another perspective, parallel to the road. He comes to the foreground and carves something onto a derelict football gate, frosted over with snow. (Or maybe he is looking for an old engraving of his, but this is just an interpretation based on our experiences).

Farrel arrives at a rusted-out container. He stops and drinks from his bottle. Then he continues his journey and exits on the left. Farrel arrives at a house, but then goes away. Cut to a man who watches Farrel leaving. (Throughout the film we get no explanation of who this character

is, and his relationship to Farrel. An article about the film states that Trujillo is his father,[303] but in the film we find no proof of that).

Cut to a man with a pushcart. On his way he meets Farrel who asks if there is any possibility of getting food. Although the man with the pushcart goes off in another direction, the camera follows him for a while.

Cut to a canteen. Through the window we see Farrel approaching. He enters. The host promises to bring him something to eat. Farrel sits down and waits. The host serves food, Farrel eats. Cut to a medium close-up of Farrel eating. Farrel is sitting at a battered red table against a green wall that forms a very well-balanced composition. Off-screen we hear a telephone system.

Cut to the kitchen. The host operates the telephone system. The talk concerns the snow and that Trujillo and Velazquez have to round up the sheep. They will need more fuel. Then the speaker from afar asks how Nazarena is doing and the host answers that there is no improvement. Cut to Farrel at the table. A man, whom we saw observing Farrel (Trujillo), comes in and brings some wood for the stove. He looks at Farrel. Camera returns to Farrel. Cut to another view of the canteen. A girl with a pot comes in. She exchanges looks with Farrel and hands the pot to the host (named Torres, as we just learned). As the girl waits she keeps exchanging looks with Farrel. Trujillo comes out of the kitchen and says that he will accompany her home. He says her name – it is Analia.

Cut to a window of a house. Late evening. Farrel sneaks up, drinks from his bottle. He sees the girl (Analia) coming in and hides himself. Analia switches on a little lamp and carries it through the room, and then she switches off the downlighter. Farrel hides behind the window and drinks.

Climax (minutes 49 - 64)

The next morning, Farrel is asleep in the latrine.

Cut to the next shot, which will last for two minutes. Camera is positioned in the house, it catches a scene through the window of two men (one of them is the host, Torres) carrying Farrel. They bring him into the house and put him on a bed (the camera moves with them). Torres puts more wood into the stove. Trujillo covers Farrel with blankets and asks him what he is doing here. Analia was born shortly after he left. Nobody would know him anymore. Not even his mother. She is sick. Trujillo says a crucial phrase: “You left me one heck of a legacy”. He asks what Farrel is hoping to find. Farrel sleeps. Trujillo leaves.

303 Violeta Kovacsics, Adam Nayman *Shore leave: Lisandro Alonso´s* Liverpool in *CinemaScope*, available at http://cinema-scope.com/cinema-scope-magazine/interviews-shore-leave-lisandro-alonsos-liverpool/ (Accessed 02.10.2012).

Cut to the outside. Rabbits are hopping in the snow inside a fence. Analia goes to them.

Cut to the house. Farrel is sitting on the bed. He stands up and takes the pot of maté tea. He puts on his shoes, drinks some more tea, and puts on his coat. Farrel goes to the door and opens it, stands in the doorway. Then he returns and takes his bag, looks around and leaves.

Cut to the canteen's kitchen. Farrel arrives and buys a loaf of bread. As Farrel leaves, Torres goes to the window, looks out and looks at the money Farrel gave him.

Analia's room. She sits at the table and writes. The door on the left opens and Farrel comes in. He brings her the bread. He offers her a piece. She doesn't seem disturbed. Farrel asks what she is drawing, she answers that it is a heart. Farrel looks around the room. She asks him for money. Farrel leaves the question unanswered.

Cut to the next room. Farrel enters. There are two beds, Farrel's mother lies on one of them. After some hesitation Farrel sits down beside her. The old woman asks if his legs hurt. Farrel responds by asking if she knows who he is. She answers that she sees a lot of people she doesn't know or recognize. He says his name, but she doesn't recognize him. Farrel puts a blanket over her hand. Farrel looks around but she asks him to leave it like it is. Farrel repeats his name once more, but she still doesn't recognize him. She asks him to repeat the name, but still, nothing. He checks if she has a fever; she says he has cold hands. Farrel stands up and leaves after he hears Analia asking whether he is going to give her some money from the next room. The scene lasts for almost three minutes.

Cut to Analia's room. Farrel takes some money out of his wallet and gives it to her. Analia puts on her coat and leaves the house. Farrel looks at her through the window. He puts more wood into the stove. Then he takes a photo from the shelf, puts it in his bag, puts on his coat and exits through the door on the left. For half a minute the camera lingers on the empty room.

A snowy road in the village. Farrel tries to overtake Analia. He catches up to her next to a barn and checks if she has the money with her. Then he gives her something, but in the long shot it isn't recognizable (we later discover it is a key chain). He says that he is leaving. The camera accompanies him and in another long shot he disappears behind a hill. The shot lasts for more than two minutes.

Epilogue (minutes 64 - 84)

Farrel's father sits at the window and peels onions.

Cut to the sawmill (mentioned earlier in the film, we see for the first time). Men are cutting wood. Analia comes in and crosses the hall. One of the men goes to her and says she should

go to the canteen, he will come shortly. Analia exits on the right, but the camera still lingers on the scene.

Mother's room. Trujillo feeds her. She asks him to dip some bread. He insists that she has to eat. Analia comes in and sits down on the next bed. Analia is sent to get dinner from Torres. Trujillo expresses relief over Farrel's departure.

Cut to the canteen. Torres and a visitor sit at a table. Analia comes it with a pot and, without comment, Torres takes it and heads towards the kitchen. The stranger asks if she likes the music, she agrees. Torres comes back with a pot, Analia leaves. Torres returns to his place at the table and offers gin to the stranger. He asks if everything is OK at the sawmill (the third time in the film when the sawmill is mentioned!), and Torres responds that they have a lot to do these days, but are running out of wood because delivery is very slow. Are they going to fix the engine on Saturday? – Yes, a mechanic is coming on Saturday. He also asks about Trujillo. Torres responds that he is always running after animals and that Trujillo is looking after Nazarena.

Analia comes into the room of Farrel's mother holding a lamp. She takes off her clothes and lies down on the bed. She turns off the light. Camera lingers on the scene. Trujillo shovels snow. He puts the shovel aside and goes into the house.

Cut to the next shot - a man standing next to a fence smoking. In the background, Analia comes out of the lavatory. The man calls to her, but she doesn´t answer. Analia sits down next to the fence and carves something into the wood. She stands up and leaves.

A long shot in the woods. Analia and her grandfather Truijllo are looking for trapped animals. This time they have no bag. On the suggestion of the grandfather they go and look for foxes. Cut to the next shot. It is a long shot in the snowy woods. Grandfather has caught a fox that lies in the trap.

Medium close-up of Analia as she stands next to a tree. She looks back towards her grandfather. He asks her to hurry up; he has caught a very nice fox. The camera reframes so that they both are in the shot.

Cut to the next long shot. Farrel's father advises Analia to be careful on the snow. As they march, the camera follows them and soon we see the village in the background. The camera lingers on the scene until both have reached a barn.

Cut to the barn interior. Analia and Trujillo enter and set down the traps. Trujillo asks Analia to go and feed the sheep.

Cut to the area with sheep. Analia comes with hay and spreads it for the sheep. Then she comes to the front of the shot and looks around as if reassuring herself that nobody can see

her. The camera reframes and we see a key ring with the name *Liverpool* in her hands. She turns it as if trying to find out what it is or what it is for (as we cannot see her face, this can be only our interpretation). End of the film.

2. 3. Tellability of the story

As it becomes obvious from the description of the film *Liverpool*, Alonso's approach to the staging is similar to that of Tsai Ming Liang – the film is dominated by static long shots and extended takes. However, what differs completely is Alonso's handling of the narrative. In regard to the stylistics, Sperber and Wilson say that "Stylistic differences are just differences in the way relevance is achieved."[304] As American philosopher Anna Christina Ribeiro stresses, all these differences in the design of a message are done for a reason - according to the relevance theory stance, form also contributes to the content.[305]

As the description of the film *Liverpool* suggests, it is a simple story, sparsely told. A sailor receives shore leave and uses it to visit his ill mother, and upon leaving gives his alleged daughter a small present. In terms of tellability it is a plot with a high relevance – it is an archetypal story about someone who returns home (lost son, for example), and we as experienced viewers know that such stories contain a huge narrative potential (tellability).[306] What follows is an attempt to explain how the mutual conditionality of the film's form and content not only structures the film into acts, but also plays with the viewer's expectations. In other words, how the huge narrative potential of the story is undermined by the minimalistic artistic design, thus frustrating the narrative expectations of the audience. A demonstration of this first requires a look at the issues of narratology followed by the application of the theory of relevance to this film example.

2. 4. Levels of narrative

In the previous chapter the film *Goodbye, Dragon Inn* was used as an example of slow cinema where, in relevance-theory terms, the third stage of the comprehension process – that of the construction of implicated conclusions – took place with delay, because the contextual information needed was usually not accessible to the viewer during the film screening. *Liverpool* is a counter example to *Goodbye, Dragon Inn*, because if in the case of Tsai Ming-

304 Dan Sperber, Deidre Wilson *Relevance. Communication and Cognition*, 2nd edition, Oxford, 1995, p. 224.
305 Anna Chirstina Ribeiro *Relevance Theory and Poetic Effects* in *Philosophy and Literature*, Vol. 37, No 1, 2013, p. 108.
306 Thus, tellability is clearly a category which also depends on our cultural context knowledge. More on this subject by Peter Hühn *Revision of Event and Eventfulness from Fri, 13 September, 2013* in Peter Hühn et al. (eds.) *The Living Handbook of Narratology*, Hamburg, available at http://www.lhn.uni-hamburg.de/node/39/revisions/189/view (Accessed 10.11.2013).

Liang´s film it was obvious that there is a huge amount of paratext needed in order to completely comprehend the film, then in Alonso's case everything is already there – onscreen. But, if in the case of *Goodbye, Dragon Inn* the filmmaker took more time and delayed the cut in showing the onscreen activities, thus creating extensive descriptions of the activities by cinematic means, then Alonso uses minimalism as his artistic approach. In terms of narrative construction, this approach can be analyzed applying the model of different levels of fictional narrative as developed by German literary scholars Matias Martinez and Michael Scheffel. Prior to an explanation of the Martinez/Scheffel theory, let's consider some of the episodes in the setup that depict Farrel's stay in Ushuaia.

After Farrel has left the ship there is a shot of him taking a gulp from his vodka-bottle and hiding it, but, as this action is filmed using a medium long shot, we cannot assess where it is. Contrary to traditional editing grammar, there is no establishing shot as an introduction to the episode that reveals the setting where the scene takes place, which would perhaps even deliver an explanation as to why Farrel is there.

The next episode is a long shot in a canteen where Farrel eats his supper. The mural behind him may create laughter for the viewer, but it is laughter for laughter's sake. It does not contribute either to the explanation of Farrel's whereabouts or to the story's development.

The next episode depicts Farrel in a striptease bar (2 shots). As it is filmed with a medium long shot with no connective shots between the previous canteen episode and the following one with Farrel awaking in a bus the next morning, we can infer that this was what Alonso considers relevant for the overall trajectory of the story. As there are no establishing shots, no passage episodes that would explain how and why Farrel moves from one activity to the next, we can deduce that this fragmented approach to staging is Alonso's signature.

The suggestion above is that the story as such fosters tellability, but let's consider these three episodes as narrative events and assess their degree of narrativity. As mentioned, Martinez/Scheffel developed their model by distinguishing between four levels of narrative[307] that belong to the realm of "the what" and two levels of "the why":[308]

1. Ereignis/event – an elementary entity of any narrative work of art.

2. Geschehen/story – events form a story when they follow one after the other chronologically.

3. Geschichte/plot – a story of events turns into a plot when the events follow one another not only chronologically, but also additionally displaying a causal determination.

307 Note that the Martinez/Scheffel model differs completely from what Gérard Genette understands under the notion of narrative levels. More on that: John Pier *Narrative levels* in Peter Hühn et al. (eds.) *Living Handbook of Narratology*, Hamburg, http://www.lhn.uni-hamburg.de/article/narrative-levels (Accessed 11.10.2013).
308 Markus Kuhn *Filmnarratologie. Ein erzähltheoretisches Analysemodell*, Berlin, 2011, p. 66.

4. Handlungsschema/plot scheme– is a global schema that is characteristic not only of the whole work, but also for groups of art works (for example, types of texts, genres).

5. Erzählung/narration – the events in their succession as told in the text.

6. Das Erzählen /narrating[309] – the presentation of a plot in a particular medium.[310]

As the three episodes demonstrate, the minimalistic narrative is created by loosening the causal chain between the various depicted events. There is no justification as to why Farrel is precisely doing the things he does. As these events follow one after the other we can assume that they belong to the same story, but the level of plot is very weak – the causal cues between the onscreen events are hardly discernible or missing completely. This loosening of the causal chain between events can be observed during the entire length of the film, although there are also some very classic hints for further story development. For example, when Farrel asks the man with the pushcart about getting lunch in the village, in the next shot we see him enter a canteen.

Looking at the particular events in these three episodes – drinking, eating, watching – we cannot assign a high degree of narrativity to them per se. But precisely herein lies the crux of the matter. Namely, as mentioned in the introduction, most theorists name change as an important condition for narrativity. But these activities, presented as solo activities with no narratively explained causal links between them, actually tend to be a form of description. Although the story obviously proceeds, the onscreen events do not actively work towards the story's further narrative development about a lost son returning home. Simply put, the pace of the narrative is slowed down and this also contributes to the film's structured looseness.

This tendency towards such minimalistic narrative design can be found in several films regarded as belonging to slow cinema. However, what has to be to underlined here is the fact that regardless of which artistic tendency is in question – minimalism or parametricity –the characteristic feature of slow films following the schema of Martinez/ Scheffel, is that these films can be described as stories because the events follow one another chronologically, but the level of the plot may be very weak. The linearity of the narration is standard in slow cinema and thus the fact that every event tends to demonstrate some kind of a development over a certain period of time serves as a sufficient causal connection for plot construction.

309 For the English translation of the terms used by Martinez/Scheffel I used the suggestion offered by Roland Weidele *Organizing the Perspectives: Focalization and the Superordinate Narrative System in Theatre and Drama* in Peter Hühn, Wolf Schmid, Jörg Schönert (eds.) *Poinf of View, Perspective and Focalization: Modelling Mediation in the Narrative*, Berlin, New York, 2009, p. 222.
310 Markus Kuhn *Filmnarratologie. Ein erzähltheoretisches Analysemodell*, Berlin, 2011, p. 66.

2. 5. Authorial intentions and disappointed expectations

A discussion of the more general issue of relevance theory is warranted here, namely that of authorial intentions, and the wish is to develop this notion by taking the listener/viewer out.

Paul H. Grice stated that one of the central features of most human communication, either verbal or non-verbal, is the expression and recognition of intentions.[311] Sperber and Wilson further develop this claim stressing the importance of expectations, which utterances automatically generate in listeners, thus leading them to the intended meaning.[312] The central claim that distinguishes the relevance theory stance from that of Grice is the statement that "the expectations of relevance raised by an utterance are precise enough and predictable enough, to guide the hearer towards the speaker's meaning".[313] As explained in the introduction, this search for relevance takes place along the lines of ostensive stimuli that positively change the cognitive environment of the listener.

A demonstration of how Alonso plays with the viewer's expectations requires a return to the introductory episode of the film, because it sheds a new light on the way in which Alonso distributes "ostensive stimuli".

It is very unusual for a film to introduce the main character without showing him at the centre of the shot. Even more, it is very unusual to show the main protagonist at the beginning of the film out of focus, on the far right of the shot. It contradicts the traditional composition principles of a film shot. According to compositional techniques, our attention is guided to the two men playing computer games. They are situated at the centre of the shot; they speak to each other and move their hands. These are precisely the points in a shot we are usually attracted to.[314] Our motion picture experiences also create a supposition that what these men are saying will give us hints for story development, but that isn't the case. So these two men only divert our attention from Farrel. Only after multiple viewings the audience can notice that the really important information – the film's leading figure, Farrel, sitting at the far right of the shot and then leaving – is actually off our radar.

The third episode of *Liverpool* follows the first one in its organizational principles. There we see two mechanics in an engine room. One tells the other to check the rudder's oil level at the stern. As the mechanic goes through the ship he discovers Farrel sleeping between the pipes and chases him away. As the film has just started and we as an audience are still unsure who the main character of the film is, we pay more attention to the talk of the two men,

311 Deidre Wilson, Dan Sperber *Relevance theory* in Laurence R. Horn & Gregory Ward (eds.) *Handbook of Pragmatics,* Oxford, 2004, available at http://www.dan.sperber.fr/?p=93 (Accessed 14.07.2013) .
312 Ibid.
313 Ibid.
314 Tim Smith *Watching you watch There will be blood* in David Bordwell *Observations on film art*, 14.02. 2011, available at http://www.davidbordwell.net/blog/2011/02/14/watching-you-watch-there-will-be-blood/ (Accessed 23.09.2012).

perhaps even expecting that leaking oil will have something to do with the story. Thus, we may overlook the activity in the corridor between the pipes when the mechanic chases Farrel away.

In narrative terms then, these first shots awaken false expectations in the viewer. Only do we gradually come to understand who the film's lead character is.

In *Liverpool* there is also the handling of a theme completely based on false expectations, namely that of the sawmill. In the film the sawmill is mentioned quite often. For example, at the beginning, in the discussion with the captain about Farrel's shore leave, and later in Ushuaia when Farrel is looking for a car to take him to his village. Then we hear about it in the phone calls in the canteen. Additionally, at the beginning of the epilogue there is a short episode where the camera follows the daily work at the sawmill. The fact that Farrel refers to the sawmill twice raises the expectation that this is a dangling cause, but as the film develops this supposition is not affirmed. What's more, the episode in the sawmill does not seem to relate to any storyline. One might even say – it has a purely decorative purpose. We see the sawmill when the story follows Analia as she travels through the village, and for no understandable reasons she passes by it. This is the second false dangling cause in this film (the first was the leaking pump in the second episode of the film). It seems that building up such false dangling causes and, consequently, disappointing viewer's expectations, is one of the narrative strategies not only of Alonso, but of slow cinema altogether. More such moments in *Liverpool* could be cited, for example, in the epilogue Trujillo expresses relief about Farrel's departure, but neither before nor afterwards do we learn the cause of his discontent with Farrel.

Thus, using the term of the notable German literary scholar from the Constance School, Hans-Robert Jauss, the horizon of expectations (Erwartungshorizont) has been violated. [315] Jauss states that the reader's horizon of expectations is formed not only by generic conventions, but also the style or the form contributes to the building of them.[316] Jauss has often been criticized for his belief that it is possible to objectify the subjective horizon of expectations.[317] English scholar Michael Toolan suggests the term "graded expectations."[318] His position is productive for analysis of slow cinema, because, as explained in the introduction, though the educated cinema viewer is the archetypal viewer of slow films, we still encounter very disparate expectations towards a film among different members of this group.

315 But note that I do not intend to follow Jauss' train of thought that connects the violation of the spectator's expectations towards novelty, thus analyzing it as a sign of aesthetic value. For more on this see Robert C. Holub *Reception Theory: a critical introduction*, London, 1984, p. 62-63 and Hans Robert Jauss *Literary History as Challenge to Literary Theory* in Hans Robert Jauss *Toward an Aesthetic of Reception*, Brighton, 1982, p. 25-45.
316 Hans Robert Jauss *Literary History as Challenge to Literary Theory in* Hans Robert Jauss *Toward an Aesthetic of Reception*, Brighton, 1982, p. 24.
317 Ralf Schneider *Reception Theory* in David Herman, Manfred Jahn, and Marie-Laure Ryan (eds.) *Routledge Encyclopedia of Narrative Theory*, London, 2005, p. 493.
318 "Subtle degrees of varying expectation, as to what will happen, to whom and when (etc.)"- Michael Toolan *Graded Expectations: On the Textual and Structural Shaping of Readers´ Narrative Experience* in John Pier (ed.) *The Dynamics of Narrative Form: Studies in Anglo-American Narratology*, Berlin, 2004, p. 216.

2. 6. Weak implicatures: dominant and in abundance

Let's once again consider one of the core statements of the relevance theory. Namely, that the listener attributes relevance to an utterance. However, if the intention of the sender of the message is not clear (strong) or if the message creates numerous implications, then such utterances belong to the realm of weak implications. This approach is typical for art, and Sperber and Wilson discusses this issue under the heading of poetic effect.[319]

The argument here is that since the mix-up of kernels and satellites[320] takes place permanently and, consequently, the expectations of the audience are constantly disappointed, the possible markers for the viewer's orientation in search for the relevance of the story's events in *Liverpool* become more and more fuzzy. In relevance-theory terms, it becomes harder and harder to distinguish between weak and strong implicatures. For example, the several phone calls in the canteen's kitchen, although staged in a manner typical for strong implicatures in a real-life situation, they have no relevance for plot development and thus become weak implicatures – the viewer can assign relevance to them if they wish to.

A clearer example is the short episode shortly after Farrel gets off the truck in his native village. He studies something on a frozen, broken-down football gate. As there is no close-up to explain what Farrel sees or does, the viewer has to interpret the scene.

At this point it is useful to introduce the concepts of gap[321] or indeterminacy[322].

Roman Ingarden describes the activity of filling in a place of indeterminacy as concretization. In any case, Ingarden considers concretizations as activities of individual readers, thus taking into account personal moods, experiences or other factors that can have an effect on the act of concretization. Not two concretizations of even the same reader will thus be identical.[323]

In literature, a gap is defined as a shift between the real and the fictional world.[324] When such shifts occur, the reader has to fill them in with his imagination.

As film is a visual art that shows seemingly everything, such gaps seem to be impossible. Wolfgang Iser stresses this in speaking about film adaptations. To his mind film gives us everything, so the viewer does not have to invest in order to complete the image.[325]

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319 Deidre Wilson, Dan Sperber *Relevance theory* in Laurence R. Horn & Gregory Ward (eds.) *Handbook of Pragmatics,* Oxford, 2004, available at http://www.dan.sperber.fr/?p=93 (Accessed 14.07.2013).
320 For definition of kernels and satellites and their role in slow narration see chapter II.2.
321 Wolfgang Iser *Der Akt des Lesens. Theorie ästhetischer Wirkung*, Munich, 1976, p. 313 ("Leerstele" may also be translated as "blanks" as translated by Robert C. Holub in Robert C. Holub *Reception Theory: a critical introduction*, London, 1984, p. 92.)
322 Roman Ingarden *The Cognition of the literary Work of Art*, Evanston, 1973, p. 50, originally published in Polish in 1937. (In German – Unbestimmtheitsstelle).
323 Robert C. Holub *Reception Theory: a critical introduction*, London, 1984, p. 26.
324 Wofgang Iser *Die Appellstruktur der Texte,* Konstanz, 1970, p. 12.
325 Wolfgang Iser *Der Lesevorgang. Eine phänomenologische Perspektive* in Rainer Warning (ed.) *Rezeptionsästhetik. Theorie und Praxis*, Munich, 1994, p. 263

But not everything can be shown on the screen. Activities such as thinking, longing, boredom or anxiety are hard to illustrate on the screen, although there are traditional principles of film grammar and acting through which these states of mind can be demonstrated. Often they are articulated verbally or explained by the previous or following episodes. As Belá Balázs stated, in film:

> genügt auch die bedeutungsvollste Einstellung nicht, um dem Bild seine ganze Bedeutung zu geben. Diese wird letzten Endes von der Position des Bildes zwischen den anderen Bildern entschieden… Das Bild bekommt in jedem Fall und unvermeidlich seine Bedeutung durch seine Stellung in der Assoziationsreihe…die Bilder sind…gleichsam mit einer Bedeutungstendenz geladen, die sich im Augenblick ihrer Berührung mit dem anderen Bild auslöst.[326]

This study in fact wishes to stress the position offered by literary scholar Dorothee Kimmich that gaps in film can be found on two levels – they can be situated between the shots (in the editing) and in the plot structure.[327] As we see in *Liverpool*, gaps can be found on both levels. The missing close-up that would explain what Farrel sees on the football gate can be seen as a gap in the shot sequence. Also, the missing information of why Farrel's father is relieved that he has left can be regarded as a gap in the plot. The viewer is left with a teaser - "a heck of a legacy", as Farrel's father expressed it.

In any case, in *Liverpool* we encounter quite classic gaps, but it's important to highlight another definition of gaps in the film as seen by Dorothee Kimmich. She explains a passage in Siegfried Kracauer's *Theory of Film* about some shots in Sergei Eisenstein's *Battleship Potemkin* (1925) as follows: shots in this film that transport multiple associations and thus are devoid of determined meaning can be understood as gaps.[328] This particular understanding of a gap – a certain abundance of possible meanings - can be found in slow films. For example, several situations in *Goodbye, Dragon Inn* can be interpreted as having an excess of associations. The concept of a gap that has to be filled out by a reader/viewer is compatible with the notion of weak implicatures as understood by the relevance theory.

It was noted that in comparison to *Goodbye, Dragon Inn*, in *Liverpool* everything needed to understand the story is onscreen. Here the thesis requires modification: in *Liverpool* there are a lot of gaps that the viewer has to fill by using their knowledge and applying the interpretation procedure. But note that there are almost no explanation as to which direction the interpretation should take, and what would be the right explanation for the onscreen

326 Belá Bálazs *Der Geist des Films*, Halle, 1930, p. 46.
327 Dorothee Kimmich *Die Bildlichkeit der Leerstelle. Bemerkungen zur Leerstellenkonzeption in der frühen Filmtheorie*, 2003, p. 4, available at http://www.uni-tuebingen.de/fileadmin/Uni_Tuebingen/Fakultaeten/Neuphilologie/Deutsches_Seminar/Abteilungen/Neuere_dt_Literatur/Homepages/Kimmich/Dokumente/Bildlichkeit_der_Leerstelle.pdf (Accessed 11.11.2013).
328 Dorothee Kimmich *Die Bildlichkeit der Leerstelle. Bemerkungen zur Leerstellenkonzeption in der frühen Filmtheorie*. 2003, p. 4, available at http://www.uni-tuebingen.de/fileadmin/Uni_Tuebingen/Fakultaeten/Neuphilologie/Deutsches_Seminar/Abteilungen/Neuere_dt_Literatur/Homepages/Kimmich/Dokumente/Bildlichkeit_der_Leerstelle.pdf (Accessed 11.11.2013) , p. 15.

activities. Even more, contrary to *Goodbye, Dragon Inn*, in *Liverpool* one can understand the story without an additional effort of filling in the gaps. This is so because the gaps in the Tsai Ming-Liang film were often related to kernel events of the story, but in *Liverpool* these spots of indeterminacy mainly affect satellite events.

Obviously, in all these cases the role of the viewer in making out the plot is crucial. The degree of confidence Alonso has in his viewers is similar to that of Tsai Ming-Liang. Even more, as Alonso declares: "My films aren't narratives. I observe people, different moments, and I put them all together in the film. The audience has to imagine or create something sitting in the chair."[329]

Speaking about *Liverpool* in particular he even tops that by saying: "It's only the audience who can make the connection between Farrel, the girl and the keychain. If there's some power in that scene, it comes from the spectator, not from the frame or whatever."[330] And finally: "Anyone can create the meaning that they'd like, and even register depths that aren't there."[331]

This last quotation of Alonso could serve as a carte blanche for a film scholar to develop symptomatic interpretations[332] of *Liverpool*, but, as expressed in the introduction, that is not this endeavour's intention. Instead, this study would like to further the notion of interpretation in another direction, namely to stress its importance for the process of comprehension. The concept of gaps has been introduced. From the point of view of cognitive narratology, any cut between the shots can be regarded as a gap, which gets filled through the process of concretization (Roman Ingarden).[333] Kuhn, quoting from different sources, underlines the importance of context and background knowledge for the process of concretization/ motivation. The viewer's global knowledge and reliance on the cognitive schemata is decisive for filling gaps. [334] In the chapter about *Goodbye, Dragon Inn* this issue was looked at, and more will be unveiled in the chapter about the film *Colossal Youth*. For the time being the discussion must veer in another direction.

Returning to the question of interpretation - depending on the importance we allot to it, the question of minimal conditions for narrativity can be broached from another perspective. Traditionally, for a chain of events to form a story at least one change of state between them

329 Michael Guillen *Liverpool. An interview with Lisandro Alonso* in *Twitch*, available at http://twitchfilm.com/2009/08/liverpoolinterview-with-lisandro-alonso.html (Accessed 27.09.2012).
330 Darren Hughes *Who´s John Ford?* in *Senses of Cinema*, 14.04.2009, http://sensesofcinema.com/2009/50/lisandro-alonso-interview/ (Accessed 23.09.2012).
331 Violeta Kovacsics, Adam Nayman *Shore leave: Lisandro Alonso´s Liverpool* in CinemaScope, available at http://cinema-scope.com/cinema-scope-magazine/interviews-shore-leave-lisandro-alonsos-liverpool/ (Accessed 02.10.2012).
332 About levels of interpretation see David Bordwell *Making Meaning: Inference and Rhetoric in the Interpretation*, Cambridge, Mass., 1989, p. 8-9.
333 Wolf Schmid *Narrativity and Eventfulness* in Tom Kindt, Hans-Harald Müller (eds.) *What Is Narratology? Questions and Answers Regarding the Status of a Theory*, Berlin, 2003, p. 20.
334 Markus Kuhn *Filmnarratologie. Ein erzähltheoretisches Analysemodell*, Berlin, 2011, p. 68.

has to be existent.[335] However, for example, Meir Sternberg goes even so far as to maintain that "You may stipulate one/two/three events, causality and so forth, but the very question of whether there is any causality in the text or not remains a matter of interpretation."[336]

Sternberg's stance touches another issue that is highly contested in narrative theory. Namely, to what degree is the story presented by the authors, or does it have to be completely constructed by the reader? Sternberg bases his approach on a very general definition of narrative – "since a narrative is a construct of our minds, any sign or any collection of signs is a narrative if it produces in us suspense, curiosity or surprise"[337]. This study's position is that in terms of film, such a broad definition is not useful as artworks tend to have some kind of a form given by the author. However, what the different slow cinema examples have demonstrated and will continue to do so throughout this study is the tendency that, in comparison to mainstream narratives, filmmakers allot more freedom to their viewers and thus allow for more interpretation. Alonso's quotations confirm this assertion. This study believes that utilizing a minimalistic approach as the artistic design of a story grants greater importance to the viewer's interpretation. However, as will be demonstrated later, the freedom given to the audiences of slow cinema can vary in degree.

Returning to the relevance theory - the fact that needs to be highlighted in this respect is Sperber's statement that the shared responsibility that lies at the core of weak implicatures is not a sign of poor communication: "It may be just the degree of communication that suits both speaker and hearer."[338]

Interviews with Alonso also reveal concrete references about the genesis of the film *Liverpool*. For example, he explains that the idea of the film actually started with an image of a sawmill he saw in a newspaper. He wanted to film in this environment.[339] He also explains how the Liverpool key ring found its place in the film:

> When I was working on the post-production of *Fantasma* in Chile, I saw a *Beatles* cover band called *The Sounds of Liverpool*. In the venue there was a young woman with a learning disability begging for money. The image of these things came together and just wouldn't go away. From there I began to think about Liverpool as a port city and then about port cities in Argentina and that's how I came to Ushuaia, which has a long history of English immigrants. Film-making is about these elusive links.[340]

335 Wolf Schmid *Narrativity and Eventfulness* in Tom Kindt, Hans-Harald Müller (eds.) *What Is Narratology? Questions and Answers Regarding the Status of a Theory*, Berlin, 2003, p. 19.
336 Meir Sternberg *Reconceptualizing narratology. Arguments for a Functionalist and Constructivist Approach to Narrative* in *Enthymema*, IV, 2011, available at http://riviste.unimi.it/index.php/enthymema/article/view/1186 , p. 46 (Accessed 2.02.2014).
337 Ibid., p. 48.
338 Deirdre Wilson, Dan Sperber *Truthfulness and Relevance*, available at http://www.dan.sperber.fr/wp-content/uploads/2009/09/wilson_sperber.pdf (Accessed 12.03.2014), p. 24
339 R. Emmet Sweeney *The Rumpus interview with Lisandro Alonso* in *The Rumpus* available at http://therumpus.net/2009/02/the-rumpus-interview-with-lisandro-alonso/ (Accessed 02.10.2012).
340 Maria Delgado *The London Film Festival. Interview-Liverpool* in *Sight and Sound*, available at http://old.bfi.org.uk/sightandsound/feature/49487 (Accessed 02.10.2013).

Thus, the idea of ostensive stimuli as supposed by Sperber and Wilson experiences a kind of defeat – the sawmill and the key ring are in this film because the director wanted them to be. What relevance can this create for a viewer's understanding of the plot? Can we still speak of poetic effect? We cannot simply continue to argue that it is for the sake of décor. Rather, the belief herein is that in such cases, similarly to cases when the director chooses not to cut thus creating a post-action lag, the relevance theory reaches its limits. Consequently, not everything unusual in a film's design that does not obey the principle of relevance can be explained by poetic effect. Some artistic choices are obviously completely arbitrary. Consequently, although this study argues that we can find similar structures to the act scheme in slow cinema, the conjunctions between them and the causality between events have to be redefined. An explanation of *Liverpool´s* act structure is thereby called for.

2.7. Explanation of the act scheme

As in *Goodbye Dragon Inn*, the setup is the longest part of the film, with all the other parts equally of the same length of some twelve to sixteen minutes. It seems that in slow cinema the setup makes up the longest part of the film – here it takes 32 minutes to reach the next part of the film. This may be connected to the fact that slow cinema consists of observational films, and observation takes time. The story mainly develops out of observation. There are only two clues that foster the narrative development of the film: the actual plot begins with Farrel's chat with the captain because it defines the goal for Farrel's character – he wants to return home. (Note that this is the longest dialogue scene in any of Alonso's films to date.) The second narrative hint expressed verbally comes at the beginning of the climax when we learn that Antalia was born shorty after Farrel's departure. From this hint, drawing from life and cinema viewing experience, the viewer can infer that Analia is Farrel's daughter.

In *Liverpool* we also encounter a staging strategy that can be marked as a turning point. Namely, whereas in the setup we encounter enclosed spaces (on the ship, in the town), at the beginning of the development we enjoy the vast landscapes of Terra del Fuego. So this is an example within slow cinema where a stylistic juxtaposition can serve as a turning point.

As the film lasts for only 84 minutes, it lacks one part of the four-act schema. That of the complicating action. As Kristin Thompson states, during the complicating action the hero still works toward his goal, but in order to achieve it, he has to change tactics.[341] In *Liverpool* this part is missing. Instead, the development begins after a lengthy setup that depicts Farrel's life on the cargo ship and his first night in Ushaia. It encompasses Farrel's arrival in the village and his first day at home. Quiet classically it corresponds to the lines of action lines in the

341 Kristin Thompson *Storytelling in the New Hollywood. Understanding Classical Narrative Technique*, Cambridge, Mass., 1999. p. 28.

development as laid out by Kristin Thompson. Namely, in development, "all the premises regarding the goals and the lines of action have been introduced."[342] Here we encounter Farrel's native village, its people and the persons who will be important later in the story (in the climax). It is his daughter Analia, his father and the host Torres, with his mother being mentioned in the conversation between Torres and his partner on the telephone system. In this point *Liverpool* corresponds to the narrative schemas of classical Hollywood filmmaking. The development ends with the episode that finds Farrel hiding behind the house.

Actually, a second storyline is established at the beginning of the climax – when we learn enough to suspect that Analia could be his daughter. For the narration it is the next dangling cause that will be resolved later on. But note that Farrel's goal in regards to the storyline is not articulated. We can only guess from his actions – buying bread for Analia, giving her money and a key chain – that he anticipates some kind of a contact with his daughter. This storyline design corresponds to Alonso's filmmaking practice of simply wanting to observe the characters.[343]

The episode where Farrel finally sees his mother is a peculiar one. We can attribute climax to this scene, using not only our real-life experience (meeting one's mother can be a crucial activity), but also by using our literary/cinematic expertise. It was Farrel's goal to meet his mother and for that this scene finds closure. As Kristin Thompson puts it "the action shifts into a straightforward progress toward the final resolution", but what is missing here is a concentrated sequence of high action.[344] The scene between Farrel and his mother even lacks the emotional intensity that would be the norm in such sequences within mainstream Hollywood films. This fact contrasts *Liverpool* to the former, although some film critics still speak about *Liverpool* as a melodrama, and Alonso might agree with them:

"I think I tell a very sad story about this sailor who's a father, and this girl who's his daughter. I didn't tell the story in a commonplace way, but I think there's a story there."[345]

In the climax both storylines get closure. Farrel encounters his mother as was his goal right from the beginning, and gives some money and a souvenir to his supposed daughter. These are two turning points, one for each storyline. As both storylines find closure, Farrel can leave. What is very unusual in the narrative construction of the film is the fact that the story does not follow Farrel as he goes away, but stays in the village and shifts the focus from Farrel to his

342 Kristin Thompson *Storytelling in the New Hollywood. Understanding Classical Narrative Technique*, Cambridge, Mass., 1999, p. 29.
343 "I don't like to explain characters, because as soon as you do you also judge them. (..) I just observe them and use montage so that the spectator must make sense of the sensations of the film. (..) If I had to choose, I would say I prefer the boring parts of cinema"- Darren Hughes *Who´s John Ford?* in *Senses of Cinema*, 14.04.2009, available at http://sensesofcinema.com/2009/50/lisandro-alonso-interview/ (Accessed 23.09.2012).
344 Kristin Thompson *Storytelling in the New Hollywood. Understanding Classical Narrative Technique*, Cambridge, Mass., 1999. p. 29.
345 Michael Guillen *Liverpool. An interview with Lisandro Alonso* in *Twitch* available at http://twitchfilm.com/2009/08/liverpoolinterview-with-lisandro-alonso.html (Accessed 27.09.2012).

daughter. Even more, although the epilogue delivers an explanation of what Farrel has given to her, it is, as was mentioned, a purely arbitrary object (both the choice of a key chain and the inscription *Liverpool* on it), which has no implications for the film's plot. This part of the film forms an extensive epilogue lasting twenty minutes. But the entire epilogue could also be considered a post-action lag, as a general narrative strategy used by Alonso.

2. 8. Definition of post-action lag

In the film's development there's a scene where Farrel meets a man with a pushcart. Although the man with the pushcart goes in a different direction than Farrel, the camera follows the man for a while. Such moments of delayed cut, when a character exits the frame, are called post-action lags and are very important to Lisandro Alonso because it is such moments that give spectators time to think about the film:

> During that pause he comes to realize that cinematic language exists, because he is made to feel the presence of the camera. And if the viewer feels the existence of the camera, he is also feeling the presence of the director. When he's made aware of all that, a viewer is forced to think about cinematic language. That is always important to me – that is to say -, making the spectator realize that, over and beyond what is happening to the fictional character, there is always someone else who is narrating the story.[346]

Although it is not this study's intention to discuss Alonso's signature or to delve into an interpretation of Farrel's story, this quotation from an interview with the filmmaker can also be viewed in terms of narrative theory, and can shed new light on how relevance is achieved in slow cinema narratives. As noted, besides the propositional attitudes communicated via language, Sperber and Wilson also speak of non-propositional attitudes. Art cinema in general and slow cinema in particular with post-action lag as a characteristic feature, represent a prime example of this kind of communication. Namely, the lingering of the camera on the shot after the action has finished opens the door to non-propositional effects. These are defined as effects that do not yield mental representations as they would with propositional effects, which are expressed as demonstrative inferences. Instead, non-propositional effects, based on non-demonstrative inferences, trigger emotions.[347]

This study would like to further expand on this issue by returning to the definition of *response* as offered by Nigel Fabb. As *response* he subsumes all such phenomena as emotional response, evaluative attitudes, impressions of intensity, profundity, sublimity, awareness of epiphanies,

346 Harry Tuttle *Lisandro Alonso interview (Cineaste)* in *Unspoken cinema*, available at http://unspokencinema.blogspot.de/2011/03/lisandro-alonso-interview-cineaste.html (Accessed 02.10.2012).
347 Jacques Moeschler *Pragmatics, propositional and non-propositional effects: can a theory of utterance interpretation account for emotions in verbal communication?* in *Social Science Information*, 2009, Vol. 48, No 3, p. 448.

poetic experience and aesthetic pleasure.[348]

But if these extended shots of delayed or seemingly useless activities are put in the foreground, then they also acquire a narrative significance and function as they decisively affect the way we experience a film. Swiss linguist Moeschler has demonstrated that we cannot separate propositional effects from the non-propositional – they are "intrinsically webbed".[349]

Post-action lag as the turning point of a story is one of the possibilities. Another, proposed here, concerns the question of how to come to terms with a slow cinema film. If in our search for the relevance of onscreen activities we arrive at the conclusion that weak implicatures cannot be regarded as a field of shared responsibility between the author and the viewer, then the variety of possible *response* is numerous.

2. 9. A new intensity of watching?

Film critics as well as film enthusiasts have problems describing Alonso's films (and other slow cinema films). The following quotation is a prime example – such sentences could be written about almost any slow cinema film:

> Seine Filme bieten auch am Ende keine Lösung für ihre Rätsel an. Sie bewegen sich vielmehr zurück zu einem Ursprung, dahin wo Bedeutung und Sinn keine Rolle spielen, wo die Bilder sich selbst genug sind und nichts bedeuten wollen. Dadurch entsteht eine neue Intensität des Sehens.[350]

Sure, there is a narrative in these films that can be analysed as exemplified above. But this "new intensity of watching" is a narrative strategy that is as important as the narrative tools – and become obvious if we consider the importance of post-action lag in *Liverpool* and other slow cinema films. But this intensity of the imagery is hard to define in words and to detect in order to analyse. As Pilkington points out, the effects generated by *response* are "marginal variations in salience".[351] They are "a matter of degree rather than something than can be precisely measured".[352] Consequently, taking into account the highly individual reactions to a film, when the edge of weak narrativity is reached the possibility of modelling more or less uniform and predictable viewer reactions to a certain film becomes unfeasible. Thus, in the last part of this chapter I cannot refer to episodes or events from *Liverpool*, because my personal reactions may differ from those of other viewers. This study can only point to a certain direction in terms

348 Adrian Pilkington *Poetic Effects: A Relevance Theory Perspective*, Amsterdam, 2000, p. 165.
349 Jacques Moeschler *Pragmatics, propositional and non-propositional effects: can a theory of utterance interpretation account for emotions in verbal communication?* in *Social Science Information*, 2009, Vol. 48, No 3, p. 461.
350 Hans K *Der argentinishce Reggisuer Lisandro Alonso*, in Südamerika Blog, 17.04.2010, available at http://www.suedamerika-blog.de/urlaub/der-argentinische-filmregisseur-lisandro-alonso/ (Accessed 02.10.2012)
351 Adrian Pilkington *Poetic Effects: A Relevance Theory Perspective*, London, 2000, p. 166.
352 Ibid., p. 166.

of what could happen in the case of a nonpropositional effect generated by a post-action lag. The reactions could be manifold, and so what needs to be highlighted is the issue of presence only as a theoretical concept without "real life examples". This also helps answer the question of why viewers are eager to watch such a complex work of art as slow cinema.

2. 10. *What Do Pictures Want?*

If art-house and slow cinema films do not use the usual artistic devices favoured by the public, why are people ready to spend two or more hours watching peculiar, weighty films?

Ed Tan speaks of the structure of interest - that a lot of theorists name interest as the basic emotion "which cannot be reduced to one or more other emotions."[353] Interest drives us to experience other destinies in the fictional world and to satisfy our curiosity. Interest is the main emotion for viewing both mainstream and art-house films, and interest is useful if one seeks an explanation as to why we want to watch the film through to the end. However, pure interest as the main driving force in choosing to watch a film is not sufficient.

In the case of the slow cinema with its peculiar narratives, one of the strategies for understanding such works of art could be the concept of the artwork as a game. Here the notion of Ernst Gombrich is useful because he states that "no representation can be understood by the viewer unless some kind of existing schema is available within which elements of the work of art can be placed."[354] In the case of slow narration, game structures can form one of the main narrative strategies. The film *Les favoris de la Lune* by Otar Iosseliani (France, 1984) is the most obvious example because the film's main story is connected with objects – how they change the owners and/or break down. But the viewer only recognizes this very unusual narrative pattern over the course of time.

The interest structure is connected with the question of why we watch films. Recreation is the main reason in the case of mainstream Hollywood films, but what of art-house films? As these films have a very loose (solute) narrative structure and story, can we assert that we watch these films in order to inform ourselves about the way other people live or about circumstances that are unfamiliar to us? Is this a sufficient explanation? Carl Plantinga addresses this question, explaining that no essential "viewing pleasure", as he calls it, exists. Instead there are various kinds of pleasure that can be obtained during film viewing, and he doubts that a single theory could sum up all of them.[355] He names some as cognitive play, visceral experience, sympathy, narrative satisfactions, and reflexivity.[356]

In the book *What Do Pictures Want?*, W.J.T. Mitchell examines the vital signs in images – the

353 Ed S. Tan *Emotiona and the Structure of Narrative Film*, Mahwah, 1996, p. 85.
354 Ibid., p. 34.
355 Plantinga, Carl *Moving Viewers: American Film and the Spectator´s Experience*, Berkeley, 2009, p. 39.
356 Ibid., p. 39.

issue that image as agency makes claims on us as viewers.[357] Although Mitchell mainly writes about static images – painting and photographs – this is also traceable in film studies. His position can be linked to the subject matter of film as an agency, as elaborated upon by Jennifer Barker[358], Vivian Sobchack[359] and others. But these ideas, as well as the concept of the returned gaze developed by Wheeler Winston Dixon[360], will not be of much help in understanding slow cinema.

The issue of why we want to watch such long, "boring" films, is also connected to the question of film scholar methodology, which will be touched upon later on. For now we should approach this question from another point of view – one situated in the broader developments of recent film theory; more precisely, the unease with the film theory predominant since the 1980s when all grand narratives were declared as having ended.[361] In film theory, the publishing of *Making Meaning. Inference and Rhetoric in the Interpretation of Cinema* (1989) by David Bordwell was regarded as a watershed. But it is not as useful for this project's endeavour, because Bordwell takes film theory in another direction. By defining historical cinema poetics instead of critical interpretation as a new way dealing with films, Bordwell sets a goal to explore "how, in determinate circumstances, films are put together, serve specific functions, and achieve specific effects."[362] This position can only be applied in analysing classical Hollywood cinema, which has a rigorous aesthetics system. But is it useful for slow cinema, where the narrative goals remain unclear and the purposes of the director are ambiguous?

2.11. Production of presence as a move against interpretation

The position of German-American literary theorist Hans Ulrich Gumbrecht is useful, although he does not offer a methodology of how to analyze artworks. His point of departure can also be circumscribed as the one "against interpretation" – his book derives from the need to present an alternative position to "the uncontested centrality of interpretation."[363] His proposition is worth quoting here at length:

> …objects of aesthetic experience (and here it becomes important, once again, to insist that I am speaking of `lived experience,` or *Erleben*) are characterized by an oscillation between presence effects and meaning effects. […]

Essential is the point that, within this specific constellation, meaning will not bracket, will not make the presence effects disappear, and that the – unbracketed – physical presence of things

357 William J.Thomas.Mitchell *What Do Pictures Want?: The Lives and Loves of the Images*, Chicago, 2006, p. 6.
358 Jennifer Barker *The Tactile Eye: Touch and the Cinematic Experience*, Berkeley, 2009.
359 Vivian Sobchack *Carnal Thoughts: Embodiment and Moving Image Culture*, Berkeley, 2004.
360 Wheeler Winston Dixon *It Looks at You: The Returned Gaze of Cinema*, Albany, 1995.
361 Jean-François Lyotard *The Postmodern Condition: A Report on Knowledge*, Manchester, 1979.
362 David Bordwell *Making Meaning: Inference and Rhetoric in the Interpretation of Cinema*, Cambridge, Mass., 1989 p. 266- 267.
363 Hans Ulrich Gumbrecht *Production of Presence*, Stanford, 2004, p. XV.

(of a text, of a voice, of a canvas with colors, of a play performed by a team) will not ultimately repress the meaning dimension. Nor is the relation between presence effects and meaning effects a relation of complementarity, in which a function assigned to each side in relation to the other would give the co-presence of the two sides the stability of a structural pattern. Rather, we can say that the tension/ oscillation between presence effects and meaning effects endows the object of aesthetic experience with a component of provocative instability and unrest.[364]

It is important to note that the presence effects, as Gumbrecht describes them, appeal exclusively to the senses and therefore we cannot equate them with *Einfühlung* - a reaction which takes place in our imagination.[365]

Interestingly, Gumbrecht also seeks to answer the question about the specific appeal of aesthetic experience. His hypothesis is that "what we call 'aesthetic experience' always provides us with a certain feeling of intensity that we cannot find in the historically and culturally specific everyday worlds that we inhabit."[366]

In his position Gumbrecht refers back to the French philosopher Jean-Luc Nancy, who, as Gumbrecht states, offers the most convincing answer to the question of what it is that fascinates us in the objects of aesthetic experience. Nancy, in his book *The Birth to Presence*, argues that there is nothing "more tiresome today than the production of yet another nuance of meaning […]. What in contrast we miss in a world so saturated with meaning […] are […] phenomena and impressions of presence."[367] Additionally, writing in another book about images and their qualities, Nancy formulates the effect intrinsic to images as the power of the image.[368]

It is important to note that these statements shouldn't be genealogically lined with, for example, Bela Balazs, Rudolf Arnheim, the notion of *photogénie* or other representatives of early film theory, who wrote about the specificity of the filmic image. They tried to justify film as an art form which was the assignment of the day. In this case, the discussion is not about the specificity of cinematic image, but about the attempt to valorize the resistance to meaning.

2.12. Vertigo of the detail

The devotees of *photogénie*, in contrast to the other film theorists named above, saw the power of film as coming not from the image itself, but from the filmed objects.[369] Robert Ray designates this as *vertigo of the detail*, and connects it to the *third meaning* concept developed by Roland Barthes.[370] Objects depicted by the film camera can have a third meaning – the

364 Hans Ulrich Gumbrecht *Production of Presence*, Stanford, 2004, p. 107 – 108.
365 Ibid., p. XV.
366 Ibid., p. 99.
367 Ibid., p. 105.
368 Jean-Luc Nancy *Am Grund der Bilder*, Zürich, 2006, p. 15
369 Jean Epstein *On Certain Characteristics of* Photogénie in Richard Abel (ed.) *French Film Theory and Criticism. A History/ Anthology,* Vol. I 1907 – 1939, Princeton, 1988, p. 317.
370 Robert Ray *How a Film Theory Got Lost and Other Mysteries in Cultural Studies*, Bloomington, 2001 p. 114.

viewer can see different objects, although what these objects are signifying remains unclear.

"[…] the third meaning, the one which appears "in excess," as a supplement my intellection cannot quite absorb, a meaning both persistent and fugitive, apparent and evasive" as Barthes puts it.[371] It is important to note, that, as Barthes writes, the third meaning "is outside (articulated) language, but still within interlocution. […] What [the third meaning] disturbs, sterilizes, is metalanguage (criticism). We can offer several reasons for this. First of all, [the third meaning…] is discontinuous, *indifferent* to the story and to the obvious meaning (as signification of the story). "[372]

This statement points to the unease with interpretation as in the writings of Gumbrecht and Nancy. Further following Barthe's struggle with the indefinable in art works, the well-known notion of *punctum* is worth mentioning. *Punctum* refers to the objects in images (vertigo of the detail again!), which strike the viewer. They are not planned or placed in a scene in order to evoke *punctum*, it is already present in the image. But *punctum* also requires the viewer's gaze so that it can come to the fore.[373] There's no denying that the experience of viewing slow cinema can be described as "to be stricken by the *punctum*". However, this study would like to point to the notion of *blind field*, which Barthes sees as one of the attributes of the *punctum*. *Blind field* is the external life of the people photographed (the term *hors-champs* from film theory could be a comparison). It connects the image to real life, and in doing so creates the possibility to see the unexpected.[374] Interestingly, despite his aversion to film, Barthes acknowledges *blind field* as a component of film, though at the same time he states that in film, as the filmic images whizz in front of our eyes, the viewer has no time to discover *punctum* in them.[375] Surprisingly, Barthes' statement brings us back to his essay about *third meaning*, where he declares that the real filmic value can only be found in film stills.[376] Barthes explains it as follows:

> The still gives us the *inside* of the fragment. […]. It is not a specimen chemically extracted from the film´s substance, but rather the trace of a superior *distribution* of features of which the film, experienced in its animated flow, would really be no more than one text among others. The still, then, is a fragment of a second text *whose existence never exceeds the fragment*; film and still meet in a palimpsest relation, without our being able to say that one is *above* the other or that one is *extracted* from the other. Finally, the still dissolves the constraint of filmic time.[377]

This last assumption connects his opinion to slow cinema. Some of the films associated with

371 Roland Barthes *The Third Meaning* in Roland Barthes *The Responsibility of Forms,* New York, 1985, p. 43-44.
372 Ibid., p. 55.
373 Rolāns Barts *Camera Lucida. Piezīme par fotogrāfiju*, Rīga, 2006, p. 53, 55, 68 [Roland Barthes *La chamber claire. Note sur la photographie,* 1980].
374 Ibid., p. 68- 72.
375 Rolāns Barts *Camera Lucida. Piezīme par fotogrāfiju*, Rīga, 2006, p. 68 [Roland Barthes *La chamber claire. Note sur la photographie.* 1980].
376 Roland Barthes *The Third Meaning* in Roland Barthes *The Responsibility of Forms*, New York, 1985, p. 60-61.
377 Roland Barthes *The Third Meaning* in Roland Barthes *The Responsibility of Forms*, New York, 1985, p. 61.

this phenomenon use long, static shots, where "nothing happens". Like film stills, these filmic images also try to stop the filmic time - in narrative theory such shots and episodes are designated as dead time. The viewer in both cases - that of film stills and of slow cinema - is left with a mission to *scrutinize* and *study* (to use Barthes' terms) these images. During this process the *punctum* can strike him, and this is one of the explanations for the pleasure derived from slow cinema.

2.13. "Pleasure, pleasure, what else should bring one anywhere?" [378]

As the issue of pleasure in cinema arises, it is important to note that it does not seem productive to analyze it using the ideas of psychoanalysis or ideology criticism. Rather, it's preferable to refer to Victor Nell and his book *Lost in a Book*. Although he talks about reading, some of his ideas can be applied to the film experience as well. He speaks about *lucid* reading as reading for pleasure. Regarding more sophisticated readers,[379] there is the paradox that they can put themselves in a reading trance while reading light literature as well as very demanding works.[380] Although it is debatable whether sophisticated cinema audiences can derive any pleasure from a standardized Hollywood production, the most important point Nell makes is that you as an audience are allowed to enjoy the artwork without being dissected by psychoanalysis or concepts of ideology.

Returning to the opening question "*What Do Pictures Want*?", it can be stated that one of the reasons we watch slow films is the hope of discovering arresting images/details and also – situations – which strike us with their *punctum* or intensity, or the power of the image as a presence effect (using Gumbrecht's term). The lengthy episode at the sawmill in *Liverpool* may be such an episode, although the question remains whether all viewers will assign such a presence effect to it. What remains under question at this point is the issue of the meaning of effects. Can they operate concurrently with presence effects? The assumption herein is that this permanent oscillation between the two systems can be regarded as a reception system of slow cinema. And last but not least, we can also watch these films for pure pleasure.

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378 Oscar Wilde *The Importance of Being Earnest*. London, 2012 [1895].
379 In the case of slow cinema these "sophisticated readers" are cinema-educated viewers as the natural audience for this kind of film.
380 Victor Nell *Lost in a Book. The Psychology of Reading for Pleasure*, New Haven and London, 1988, p. XIII, 2.

3. *The Turin Horse* (dir. Béla Tarr, Hungary, 2011) [381] - a strong case of parametric narration

What is most striking during the first, very inattentive look at the discussion about slow cinema is the absolute fetishization of the long take. Additionally, the fact that slow cinema representatives can also be found on the lists that try to delineate the ultimate representatives of the parametric cinema prompted a turn to the question about the relationship between the parametric mode of narration and slow cinema. During the analysis of the film *Liverpool* the conclusion came to the fore that other critical concepts can also be applied to slow cinema films. Therefore a strong suspicion arose that parametricity may be yet another tool with which to approach these case examples.

The aim is to ponder the issue of parametric cinema using two very close, but actually quite different film examples – Béla Tarr´s *The Turin Horse* and Fred Kelemen´s *Fallen* (2005, Germany, Latvia). Simply put, these two examples can be considered as two different types of the parametric mode – whereas *The Turin Horse* exemplifies the parametric narrative of the strong order, *Fallen* is a representative of the parametricity of weak order. As it will be shown, such a differentiation can be made taking into account not only the staging devices used by both directors, but also by considering the degree of narrativity in each film. This chapter will open with the explanation of the concept of parametric cinema. Then the concept will be translated in terms of Relevance theory. What follows is a close description of the film *The Turin Horse* (the film *Fallen* will be under scrutiny in the next chapter). Acknowledging the very complex mise-en-scène of *The Turin Horse*, it must be stressed that in the case of this film the seemingly simple description is already an interpretation. The camera movements that are described and those that are left out, the moments of stasis that were stressed and so on already form a subjective version of the film's narrative and its visual construction. Similarly to previous examples, a shot in this film often runs for the whole duration of the episode. The camera follows the two principal characters and holds them in the frame. In doing so, it carries out a wide range of movements through the space.

The film's every shot will be described very carefully, paying attention not only to the story events but also to the staging strategies of the director.

The description of the film is followed by a discussion about repeated and unique events in the film, highlighting potato eating as a case example. Then the four act structure is explained, and finally the frequency and exceptionality of events in *The Turin Horse* are scrutinized. This section ends with a return to the perspective of the Relevance theory.

381 Béla Tarr´s (born 1955) first film *Family Nest* premiered in 1977 when he was only 22. He rose to international acclaim in 1994 with his seven hour epic *Sátántangó*, and after that he has been present on the international film festival circuit with all his subsequent films. The film critics' love for his very rigorous style culminated in 2011 when his film *The Turin Horse* received the Jury Grand Prix and the FIPRESCI Prize at the Berlin International Film Festival.

3.1. Parameteric cinema definition

The concept of parametric narration has been introduced in David Bordwell's book *Narration in the Fiction Film* (1985) with a reference to Noël Burch. There he maintains that:

> Parametric narration establishes a distinctive intrinsic norm, often involving an unusually limited range of stylistic options. It develops this norm in additive fashion. Style thus enters into shifting relations, dominant or subordinate, with the *syuzhet*. The spectator is cued to construct a prominent stylistic norm, recognizing style as motivated neither realistically nor compositionally nor transtextually. The viewer must also form assumptions and hypothesis about the stylistic development of the film.[382]

In an interview David Bordwell states that "parametric narration for me becomes a case where the decorative function of style has become part of the whole film's organizing principles."[383] As English film scholar Mark Betz rightly remarks, Bordwell's concept of parametric narration has found little recognition years after the book's publication.[384] In contrast to Bordwell who sees parametricity as a modernist phenomenon concerning only a few films and filmmakers, Betz claims that the parametric mode has become not only widespread and perceivable, but also more recognizable, watchable and marketable over the last twenty years.[385] Thus he proposes to apply the term parametricity to films made beyond Europe and also makes a claim to understand modernism not as a historical period, but as an aesthetic form that can occur across cultures and times.[386] However, even when it is obvious that with the emergence of slow cinema the parametric mode of narrative has overstepped the borders of just several "fugitive" film examples from European cinema of the 1960s and 1970s, the understanding of the term herein still follows Bordwell's line, which is very rigorous. He reserves the term only for those films which narratives exhibit a very strong rigour of order and repetition, and rules out those filmmakers whose narrational style is not decisively patterned.[387] For Bordwell precisely herein lies the difference between art cinema and parametric narration. In art cinema the style is still subordinated to such *syuzhet*-defined functions as creating realism or expressive subjectivity, authorial commentary or a play among such factors.[388] Additionally, style in art cinema becomes more prominent against the backdrop of classical norms and its tendency to deviate from "extrinsic norms of the mode"[389] as Bordwell puts it. In contrast, the film style in

382 David Bordwell *Narration in the fiction Film*, Madison, 1985, p. 288-289.
383 Jacob Isak Nielsen *Bordwell on Bordwell: Part IV - Levels of Engagement* in *16:9*, February 2005, available at http://www.16-9.dk/2005-02/side11_inenglish.htm (Accessed 3.02.2014).
384 Mark Betz *Beyond Europe: On parametric Transcendence* in Rosalind Galt, Karl Schoonover (eds.) *Global Art Cinema: New Theories and Histories*, New York, 2010, p. 34.
385 Ibid., p. 39.
386 Ibid., p. 40.
387 Matthew Flanagan *Slow Cinema: Temporality and Style in Contemporary Art and Experimental Film*, 2012, University of Exeter, p. 134, https://ore.exeter.ac.uk/repository/handle/10036/4432 (Accessed May 2013).
388 David Bordwell *Narration in the Fiction Film*, Madison, 1985, p. 275.
389 Ibid., p. 275.

parametric mode is at least equally important to plot patterns.[390]
But how is it possible to translate such an accentuated aesthetic function into the terminology of the Relevance theory?

3.2. The incorporation of style in Relevance theory

Surprisingly, Bordwell's understanding of the viewer's activities during a screening of a parametric film can be very well described using the Relevance theory if we define "parameters, or stylistic procedures"[391] as ostensive stimuli. As Sperber and Wilson state, ostensive stimuli are stimuli which are designed to attract the audience's attention and help them to focus on the communicator's intended meaning.[392] On plot level these mostly very extensive durational shots encountered in many slow cinema films bear no meaning, but they acquire one when interpreted as features of parametric narrative. Thus Wilson and Sperber's thesis hold true that "Just as the failure to provide relevant information at one level may be used as an ostensive stimulus at another, so the production of an utterance which is apparently uninterpretable at one level may be used as an ostensive stimulus at another one."[393]

If we consider the long duration of the shots, the flamboyant camera movements and shot compositions as ostensive stimuli, which lie at the heart of parametric style, then the next question regards the role of style in the communicative situation. In their watershed book *Relevance: Communication and Cognition* Dan Sperber and Deirdre Wilson argue that "Style arises (..) in the pursuit of relevance."[394] Having the parametric mode of narration in mind as a very strong demonstration of the author's signature, the following passage about the communicative role of style illuminates the very specific reception situation of slow cinema films, located within the framework of film festival economy. Since this quotation can be regarded as very informative, it is worth quoting here at length:

> From the style of a communication it is possible to infer such things as what the speaker takes to be the hearer's cognitive capacities and level of attention, how much help or guidance she is prepared to give him in processing her utterance, the degree of complicity between them, their emotional closeness and distance. In other words, a speaker not only aims to enlarge the mutual cognitive environment she shares with the hearer; she also assumes a certain degree of mutuality, which is indicated, and sometimes communicated, by her style.[395]

Surely in this case Sperber and Wilson are talking about a real-life situation, while we are considering works of art. Nevertheless, this quotation highlights the strong bonds between

390 David Bordwell *Narration in the Fiction Film*, Madison, 1985, p. 275.
391 Noël Burch *Theory of Film Practice*, London, 1973, p.278.
392 Deidre Wilson, Dan Sperber *Relevance theory* in Laurence R. Horn & Gregory Ward (eds.) *Handbook of Pragmatics,* Oxford, 2004, pp. 607 – 632, available at http://www.dan.sperber.fr/?p=93 (Accessed 14.07.2013).
393 Ibid.
394 Dan Sperber, Deidre Wilson *Relevance. Communication and Cognition*. 2nd edition, Oxford, 1995, p. 219.
395 Ibid., p.217-218.

the sender of an utterance and its receiver. In the case of cinema though, the question of whether the viewer is capable of recognizing these stylistic features arises. Opinions over this question differ quite explicitly. For example, German cognitive psychologists Stephen Schwan et al. in assessing the role of cuts in a film came to the conclusion that the formal structure of the film material is irreverent for the viewers – the event-inherent features of the depicted activity sequences were of far more greater importance.[396]

However, concerning the parametric mode of narrative, Bordwell expresses the opinion that in the case of these films the viewer's main goal has to be to map out the stylistic pattern of a particular film, but it is useless to try to build an interpretation of a certain stylistic parameter, because "If a film's stylistic devices achieve prominence, and if they are organized more or less according to rigorous principles, independent of *syuzhet* needs, then we need not motivate style by appealing to thematic considerations."[397]

By saying this Bordwell acts radically against the interpretative urge of film critics and underlines the arbitrariness of the stylistic choices in parametric mode.[398] Bordwell expresses the conviction that the stylistic effects created by the parametric mode are so impressive that viewers are able to register them[399] and this study is in agreement, because in the case of parametric style the staging features are so explicitly flamboyant that they cannot go unnoticed by a cinema-educated audience.

Curiously enough, if, according to Bordwell, the stylistic choices are so impressive and cinema educated audiences are able to register them and their variations throughout the film, then the search for relevance in a parametric film becomes a clear-cut and easy task. However, the question arises of whether the search for relevance, that is, for the stylistic patterns in a parametric film is enough to describe the viewing experience of such a film. This issue will be touched upon later on. The film's structure has to be described as a starting point for the analysis.

3.3. Description of the film's structure

The Setup (minutes 1 – 30)

The film opens with a narrator's voice, who, while the shot stays black, tells the story how in 1889 in Turin, Friedrich Nietzsche rescued a horse from a cabman. It was the beginning of his madness, but of the horse we know nothing. In the second shot of the film the camera pans along with a horse's journey through a scant landscape for 259 seconds and ends with a fade out.

396 Stephen Schwan, Bärbel Garsoffky, Friedrich W. Hesse *Do film cuts facilitate the perceptual and cognitive organization of activity sequences?* in *Memory and Cognition*, 2000, 28 (2), p. 221.
397 David Bordwell *Narration in the Fiction Film*, Madison, 1985, p. 283.
398 Ibid., p. 283.
399 Ibid., p. 283.

The next shot (shot nr. 3) announces the first day. From now on the daily routines are being repeated for six days with miniscule changes in visual design. We can also describe these daily routines as parameters as it is understood by David Bordwell, so that the whole story can be structured around them, and the differences between the repeated events and unique events in the narrative are discernable.

Shot 4. The horse and the man approach their home. The daughter comes to greet them. They bring the horse into the stable and the camera accompanies them. The daughter gives it some hay to eat. Then both characters put the carriage into the outhouse, but the camera first frames this action from the doorway of the stable, and then moves out into the yard. The father exits the frame on the right. The camera accompanies the daughter while she takes some laundry from the line in the background, next the father appears in the shot anew picking up something from the ground. Both of them come to the camera and exit the shot on the left. The shot stays empty for several seconds.

Shot 5. The daughter helps her father undress; it becomes clear to the viewer that the father's hand is damaged. Afterwards the father lays down to rest. The camera follows the daughter as she collects some potatoes from the chest, puts them on the stove to boil, and sits down in front of the window and looks at the storm outside. The motif of the daughter sitting at the window lasts for one and a half minutes with the camera slowly changing position. When the composition reaches a camera position with the daughter seen from behind in a long shot, the shot lasts for half a minute. Such moments of stasis are very common in the trajectory of the camera movements in the film. The serial character of the film's score, which consists of different variation of the same theme and which accompanies the film now and then, stresses the serial character of the visual narrative.

Shot No. 6 starts with a static close-up of the potatoes boiling for several seconds (moment of stasis). When the daughter comes to the stove and takes them out of the pot, the camera starts to move observing how she arranges the table. When the table is set, the camera lingers on the scene for several seconds before it again starts to accompany the daughter as she goes to the sleeping father and announces that everything is ready. They eat supper, with the camera steadily watching as the father's hot potato is peeled. This is followed by a static frame of a close-up of the father as he eats the potato. Afterwards the father sits down in front of the window, whereas the daughter finishes her supper and cleans up. The daughter exits the shot on the left, whereas the shot ends with the camera slightly zooming in on the father in front of the window. This moment of stasis lasts for about eleven seconds.

Shot 7. The daughter barricades the door and puts some wood into the stove. The father, off-screen, encourages her to go to sleep; she switches off a few lamps and washes her face. The daughter exits the shot while we see some light coming from the off-area. In the darkness, with only the stove burning (a stasis shot that lasts for over two and a half minutes), they talk about the woodworms, which, for the first time in 58 years, are silent. They don't know what to make out of it. After multiple viewings it becomes clear that at this early point in the film -

its 30th minute - there is the first sign of the world coming to an end (this will be the overall theme of the film). Thus, we can infer that the utterance/ message of the film will be the decay of the world. So with this statement the setup and the first day end.

Complication action (minutes 30 – 70)

Shot 8. Title "The Second Day".

Shot 9. Inside the house (seen in the long shot), the light is slowly getting brighter. The daughter enters the empty shot, puts some wood into the stove, takes two buckets and goes outside to a well. The camera follows her and observes how she fetches some water from the well, then she and the camera return back home. The shot ends with the daughter leaning against the door.

Shot 10. A reverse shot to the father who wakes up from the door slamming. This very common sequence of shot-reverse-shot in classic filmmaking is a very uncommon feature for the editing design of this film.

The daughter comes into the shot and helps him dress. The camera leaves the father sitting on the bed and accompanies the daughter getting a bottle of brandy from the shelf and coming back to the table, where she and her father drink some brandy. The focus and a static shot on the father's face. Cut.

Shot 11. A close-up of a bowl. The daughter comes from the right and washes her face. Then she takes the bowl, which is placed next to the window, and goes to the camera, whereas the camera zooms out for several meters until the daughter pours out the water into an off-screen place right past the camera. Then both – the daughter and the camera - come back in a hurry with the father already waiting in the doorway.

The shot continues with both characters heading to the stable. They pull the carriage out of the outhouse and the horse out of the stable; the daughter comes in and out of the shot. The horse refuses to move. They dismount it and bring both the horse and the carriage back.

Shot 12. Again in the corner with the father's bed. The shot starts with an empty frame. The father comes in followed by his daughter, who helps him change his clothes. Then the father exits passing the camera on the left, and the daughter on the right. After they have left the shot it remains empty for several seconds, then a cut (with a sound bridge of chopping woods) to shot 13.

Shot 13. The father chucks timber. The camera zooms slowly out of the close-up and reveals the daughter washing clothes on the left side of the frame – the sound of water can be heard before we see the daughter standing at the bowl – this can be regarded as similar to the sound bridge between the prior two frames. The father comes to the foreground and fixes a washing line. He spans it, leaving the frame on the right, with the line reaching into the off-screen area. The daughter hangs laundry. The shot ends with a lengthy static frame on the linen. As mentioned above, this is one of the visual strategies of the film whereby a very actively moving shot often ends with a static frame.

Shot 14. It is a very long shot with the daughter standing at the bowl in the background. She takes the bowl, comes to the camera and passes it on the left, and pours the water out somewhere behind the camera, behind the scene. This shot is a variation of the action in shot nr. 11, only this time the mise-en-scéne is different. The camera pans to the right and discovers the father working at a workbench, framed in a medium long shot. This shot composition creates a tension between the planes of the shot – the daughter far away in the background and the father very close to the camera in the foreground.

The camera reframes so that there is a close-up of the father's hand making holes in a leather belt. Then the camera returns to a close-up of the father's face. The daughter comes to him and announces that dinner is ready. After dinner together - the camera concentrating on the daughter's medium close-up - the daughter does the washing up. The camera turns to the right and reveals the father sitting in front of the window. As we already witnessed, such camera movements that reveal, as a surprise, a figure on the right or left, belong to the film intrinsic norm.

The daughter checks the fire in the stove and sits down in the far left. Before the cut there is a static shot of this scene for several seconds.

Shot 15. The father wakes up from knocking at the door. A neighbour has run out of brandy and has come to ask for some. The daughter takes a bottle from the neighbour (a close-up of the bottle) and goes straight to the camera, while the camera zooms out for several meters as in shots 11 and 14. After she has filled up the bottle, the bottle and the camera return to the table where the father and the neighbour are sitting. The camera looks over the father's shoulder at the neighbour, who delivers a long monologue proclaiming that the world has been debased by "them", but he delivers no explanation who "they" are. The father says that all his talk is rubbish. The neighbour gives them some coins for the brandy and leaves. The daughter gathers the coins, goes to the window and together with the camera watches the neighbour leaving across the meadow for almost a minute – we encounter another moment of stasis in the camera's journey.

Development I (minutes 70 - 98)

Shot 16. The Third Day.

Shot 17. The daughter wakes up and dresses. She takes the buckets and goes to the well. The camera accompanies her in both directions.

Shot 18. The father gets up. He seems to awaken by the sound of the buckets. The daughter comes and dresses him, and then he drinks his usual glass of brandy at the table. Before exiting he shouts for his coat.

These two episodes (shots 17 and 18) should be highlighted because for almost ten minutes we witness daily tasks which are repeated every morning, but for the viewer that means witnessing these actions in their full duration. These are the first ten minutes in a usual day for the Ohlsdorfer family. This is way for the viewer to become immersed and carried away by the

seemingly unlimited duration of the shots. What makes these two episodes differ a little from other episodes, which all show daily deeds in their full duration, is the fact that in comparison to washing laundry or chopping wood, dressing or getting dressed or getting water from the well show actions in their full duration with no omissions. In comparison, the process of doing laundry can be cut short for the purposes of filming, so that the real duration of the action will not always equal its duration onscreen. If we take into account that the cuts or editing remain altogether unnoticed by the audience, then shots nr. 17 and 18 literally are life, trying to hide the filmic devices which are being used.

Shot 19. The father approaches the stable. He opens the door and goes in. He takes a pitchfork and starts to muck out the place. The daughter comes in, takes a pushcart and carts the muck away. The camera follows her as she exits the stable, empties the pushcart and returns. Then the camera accompanies the father as he takes a bucket, goes out and brings water for the horse. The daughter says that the horse is not eating, but the father insists that she will. Before they leave the daughter closes the door of the stable.

Shot 20. The daughter takes plates out of a cupboard and puts them on the table. As usual, she takes the potatoes out of the pot. Both characters eat their dinner, but they are disturbed by a noise. The father nods to the daughter to find out what is going on. The daughter leaves the frame on the right, while the father continues eating with a static camera shot on him for several seconds (a moment of stasis again).

Shot 21. A very long shot of a landscape. We see a carriage moving on the horizon. As it approaches and the camera zooms out, we discover that this is actually a view out of a window (here we encounter the window motif once again). Off-screen we hear both characters talking. The arriving people are Gypsies. The father orders the daughter to chase them away. The camera zooms in as the Gypsy carriage stops at the well for water. The daughter comes and tells them to leave, but they invite her to come with them to America. She refuses. The father, cursing, comes with an axe and chases the Gypsies away. They leave, but promise to return. The oldest Gypsy gives the daughter a book. Off-screen we hear the Gypsies cursing “Drop dead, drop dead”.

Shot 22. A close-up on the plates with potatoes. The daughter cleans the table and sets down the newly received book. She sits down on her bed and starts to read out loud, very slowly. While she reads the narrator tells us of the storm outside.

Development II (minutes 98 - 128)

Shot 23. The Fourth Day.

Shot 24. The daughter puts some timber into the stove, puts on a scarf, takes the buckets and goes to the well. The camera stays in the doorway and films the daughter in a very long shot. The daughter opens the well, but then rushes back to the house and calls the father. Typically for the sparse dialogue in this film, she says “The well”. Now the father comes with her and the camera accompanies them. Both characters and the camera look into the well – there is

no water. The father curses off-screen. They return to the house and the camera holds a static shot on the father thinking, leaving the daughter out of frame on the left. He asks for brandy, which the daughter serves coming into the frame from the right (crossing the 180 degree line).
Shot 25. In a medium close-up the daughter opens the door to the stable. She (and the camera) goes to the horse and asks why it won't eat. She gathers the muck into a pushcart and takes it out (outside the frame), with the camera remaining in the stable. She puts the pushcart away somewhere behind the camera.
A continuous shot – the daughter takes a bucket and leaves the shot through the stable door on the right with the camera remaining inside. She brings some water for the horse and encourages her to drink. The daughter closes the door from the outside; the camera stays inside with the horse. A static on the horse. At this moment a norm of this film can be defined as a long take that often finishes with a longer static shot on something – either an empty shot, or an object or a person. Or, in this case: on a horse.
Shot 26. In the house the father gathers some things and orders the daughter to pack - they are not staying here any longer. We witness the daughter as she packs things including a portrait of her mother (as we may guess), blankets, brandy and potatoes. Then the camera pulls out and we see the father gathering things in the middle of the house. The daughter comes in and out of the frame helping him. The father tells the daughter to get the handcart. A short moment of stasis in the journey of the camera with the father standing in the centre of the room.
Importantly, the fact that the daughter packs a portrait of a woman that the viewer will interpret as her mother - why else would she take the care to pack it - has no further implications to the film's plot. Once again Béla Tarr doesn't show interest in a situation or in things that a filmmaker working in the Hollywood tradition would develop further. The portrait of the mother remains a false dangling cause.
Shot 27. The daughter opens the door of the outhouse, takes out a small handcart and brings it to the front of the house, and re-enters the house. The father comes out and goes to the stable – the camera follows him. He brings out the horse and takes her to the carriage, which is now fully packed. He ties her behind the carriage. The daughter starts to pull the carriage. The shot ends with a close-up of a wheel of the carriage, holding for several seconds. This frame can be regarded as a classic pillow shot.
Shot 28. The vast landscape with the horizon. The father and the daughter disappear behind it, but after a minute they come back and leave the shot. After they have left, the shot still lasts for several seconds.
Shot 29. In front of the house. Both main characters arrive. The father takes the horse away, while the camera remains with the daughter as she starts to unpack the carriage. When the father returns he helps to empty the carriage, and for almost three minutes they continue this task. While the father returns the handcart, we witness the daughter going in and sitting down in front of the window. The father returns, picks up the horse's collar and also goes inside, while the camera stays outside the house. The camera zooms in very slowly on the daughter

on the other side of the window, and lingers on the scene for almost a minute and a half.

The climax (minutes 128 – 148)

Shot 30. The Fifth Day.

Shot 31. As the father wakes up, the daughter comes in and helps him dress. They go to the table and the father drinks not only his glass of brandy, but also takes a gulp from the bottle. The shot ends with a static image of two glasses and an empty bottle on the table.

Shot 32. The father opens the stable door and the camera zooms in on an extreme close-up of the horse, but then zooms out after several seconds. The father takes the collar off the horse and leaves the shot on the right. The daughter stands beside the horse, and then closes the door. The shot ends with a static shot on the stable door.

Shot 33. A fuzzy image of the landscape. The camera zooms out and we see the father sitting in front of the window. He has fallen asleep. As the camera dollies backwards, we discover the daughter sitting at the table, sewing. The daughter then exits the frame on the left, with the father still sleeping in front of the window in the background. The daughter comes back into the shot from the left and sets the table. The camera tracks a little bit to the right, so that the table is in the shot. In profile, both characters eat potatoes. After a while the father goes back to his place in front of the window and the camera follows him. The take ends with a static shot of the father sitting at the window.

Shot 34. A dark shot with nothing visible in it. The daughter asks off-screen: “What’s the darkness?” The father orders her to turn on the light. The daughter lights the lamps one after the other with fire from the stove. Slowly we recognize the father sitting in front of the window. The daughter sits down on her bed.

Shot 35. A close-up of a lamp. The light in it fades to dark.

Shot 36. Darkness. The daughter tries to light a lamp and the father comes to help her. He orders the daughter to bring some embers. She brings some, the father lights a lamp. They point out that even the embers are burning out. The father encourages her to go to bed - tomorrow they will try again. In the darkness we hear the wind outside. The narrator’s voice tells us that the father and the daughter go to their beds and fall asleep. The storm has subsided. Dead silence overcomes the house.

Epilogue (minutes 148 – 152)

Shot 37. The Sixth Day.

Shot 38. Music begins while the shot stays black. Slowly it gets brighter. Both characters are sitting at the table. Whereas the father eats, the daughter does not. He encourages her to eat. For several seconds there is a static shot on both of them sitting at the table (a tableau). A slow fade out.

3.4. Repeated versus unique events of the mundane

In the introduction to the chapter the claim was made that the film *The Turin Horse* is a clear example of parametric narrative in a strong sense. In order to prove this we have to constitute an intrinsic norm that is developed and varied throughout the film. In terms of film grammar, the moving camera in *The Turin Horse* features as this intrinsic norm. Even more, the visual tension in the film is created between the moving camera and moments of stasis in its way across the space. This rigorous mise-en-scène is employed to depict a simple plot, which supports David Bordwell's claim that parametricity is possible only in very simple stories.[400] For the purpose of analysis the plot should be separated from the style for the time being, and *The Turin Horse* should at first be scrutinized from the point of view of the story.

As becomes clear from the film's description, the story develops within altering episodes with repeated every day actions and unique ones that offer a change from these uniform, tiresome activities. So the unique events such as laundry or chopping woods alternate with repeated activities such as cooking and eating potatoes, or sitting in front of the window. The unique activities follow the principle that one or two unusual actions take place every day. On the second day, a neighbour visits for brandy. On the third day, a carriage with gypsies stops by to drink from their well, but the father chases them away. On the fourth day, their well is dry, which is been seen by the father as a bad sign, so they pack and drive away. On the fifth day, the lamps and the embers burn out.

On the sixth and last day of the plot, both characters sit at the table. Whereas the father eats the potatoes, the daughter sits still. The father encourages her to eat. These are minor events that would not be deserving of the filmmaker's or the audience's attention in other films, but they are precisely what brings change into the repetitive mundane and moves the plot forward.

But also the way the filmmaker structures the film, dividing it into six days, sharpens the viewer's attention to the fact that there has to be some kind of a development over the course of the days. In its structure *The Turin Horse* is very close to *Jeanne Dielman, 23 Quai du Commerce, 10 80 Bruxells* (1975) by Chantal Akeman, but with less of a harsh ending. Similar to Akerman's film, the story comes to the fore through minor changes in the everyday routine.

One can subsume the relation of both films to the depicted events with a quotation of André Bazin, when he writes about the film *Umberto D*. (dir. Vittorio De Sica, Italy, 1952), which can be viewed as a predecessor of the current slow cinema:

> Die erzählerische Grundeinheit des Films ist nicht die Episode, das Ereignis, der Theatercoup, der Charakter des Protagonisten, sondern die Aufeinanderfolge der konkreten Augenblicke des Lebens, von denen keiner den Anspruch erheben kann, wichtiger zu sein als der andere: Ihre ontologische Gleichwertigkeit löst schon vom Prinzip her jede dramatische Kategorie auf.[401]

400 David Bordwell *Narration in the Fiction Film*, Madison, 1985, p. 289.
401 Robert Fischer (ed.): André Bazin *Was ist Film?,* Berlin, 2009, p. 377.

These changes may even remain unnoticed to a less attentive viewer, but that is precisely what unites all slow narration films – they are challenging to the audience.

3.5. Eating potatoes – an everyday ritual

The potato-eating is a daily ritual. Let's trace how it is staged throughout the film, because the differences become visible through minor changes in the mise-en-scéne.

On the first evening the daughter collects the potatoes from a chest, cooks them and then puts on the table. While they eat the camera first tracks a close-up on the father's one healthy hand with which he impatiently peels the hot potato. Then the camera pulls back to a medium close-up on the father eating, which lasts for about half a minute.

During supper on the second day the camera concentrates on the daughter eating for almost a minute, with her father seen from behind. On the third day, we see both eaters in profile at the table eating potatoes for breakfast in a medium long shot. In the afternoon, the potato-eating activity itself is left out, and we witness only how the daughter removes the dishes from the table. On the fourth day there is no potato-eating episode, but on the fifth day we witness both eaters again at the table eating in profile. Each time the wandering camera stops on this activity, and although the framing changes from one potato-eating scene to another, what unites them is the fact that during the eating itself the camera always stays put.

In the case of these repeated activities we can speak about the serialization of the parametric narrative – the author takes a parameter (in this case it is a particular situation) and varies it across the film. But it's up to the viewer to trace the miniscule differences in each mise-en-scene. David Bordwell states that parametric cinema takes the viewer's capacity to the edge. [402] He supposes that the viewer will recognize the pattern instead of noticing all of the parametric variations.[403] In this case the viewer doesn't notice the miniscule differences in the setting so much as the repeated use of the situation itself. Bordwell reckons that the viewer, as the denotative meaning does not offer anything new, goes for the connotative effect.[404] At this stage we encounter a difference between the suppositions of David Bordwell and the declaration of the filmmaker. Namely, whereas Bordwell stresses the meaning of the connotation for the plot of a parametric film, Béla Tarr accentuates that his films are not meant to be interpreted. He states that in his films he wants to be closer to life than to cinema.[405] He wants to achieve this by witnessing activities that other filmmakers would have left out (cooking potatoes, dressing and undressing).

Bordwell also states that in a parametric film the story acquires a spatial quality, because the

402 David Bordwell *Narration in the Fiction Film,* Madison, 1985, p. 306.
403 Ibid., p. 306.
404 Ibid., p. 306.
405 Konstanty Kuzma *Béla Tarr on* Turin Horse, in *East European Film Bulletin*, 15. Feb. 2011, available at http://eefb.org/archive/february/belatarr-on-the-turin-horse-2/ (Accessed 2.02.2014).

story has been stretched.[406] In the case of *The Turin Horse* this occurs in every scene whereby all the miniscule stages of such mundane acts as potato-eating, dressing, getting the water are displayed. Every step of these activities is worth showing, and is what creates an overload of information for the viewer. André Bazin defines it as going to the edge of the duration.[407]

Other activities that form narrational motifs are the bringing of the water from the well, dressing or undressing the father, sitting in front of the window, and mucking out the stable. These events are interlaced with the unique activities mentioned above, but the repeated activities form the tedious part, where "noting happens". The extended length of the shot invites the viewer to scan the frame for minor differences in the setting and accentuates the expectations for a difference.

The unique activities, like the arrival of the gypsies, possess the promise of delivering a new plot turn and rousing the viewer from the lethargy caused by the repetition of daily routines. Béla Tarr states that he wanted to look at things and say, this is also information, and if somebody is listening that is also information.[408] He declares that, in his opinion, everything can form a story. However, if that's so, then does the act scheme of *The Turin Horse* not differ from standard story telling strategies?

3. 6. Act scheme in *The Turin Horse*

Whereas the division of *The Turin Horse* into six days by Béla Tarr is justified on the narrative level because with each day the doom comes closer to the lonely farmstead, the four act structure casts a different light on the film's viewing process.

The point of departure herein is what has been emphasized by Kristin Thompson, that every 25 – 30 minutes a significant event happens in a film. These acts, as she names them and as are mentioned above, have roughly the same length and structure of the narrative time into larger blocks. The supposition is that parallel to the six day structure the act structure also operates in *The Turin Horse*, but with a different goal. Whereas over the six days the narrative becomes more and more dense, with each day bringing in new bad news, the four act structure brings forth the discovery that every thirty minutes a major event occurs in the film, which pulls the viewer out of the automatism of his trance. (The claim herein is that the witnessing of the everyday routine with almost the same activities transfers the viewer into a trance-like state of mind). Thus, the four act scheme serves better in terms of shedding light on the functional perspective of the film.

As *The Turin Horse* lasts for almost two and a half hours, it consists not only of a set-up, a complicating action, a development, a climax and an epilogue, but also of a supplementary second development part. Meaning, the set-up lasts for 30 minutes, the complication action for

406 David Bordwell *Narration in the Fiction Film*, Madison, 1985, p.276.
407 Robert Fischer (ed.) André Bazin *Was ist Film?,* Berlin, 2009, p. 377.
408 Virginie Sülavy *Interview with Béla* Tarr in *Electric Sheep: a deviant View of Cinema*, 4.06.2012, available at http://www.electricsheepmagazine.co.uk/features/2012/06/04/the-turin-horse-interview-with-bela-tarr/ (Accessed 2.02.2014).

40, development I for 28, development II for 30 and the climax for 20 minutes. It is completed by an epilogue, which, as usual, is kept very short - only 4 minutes. *The Turin Horse* therefore serves as an example for Kristin Thompson's theory that it isn't the number of parts that is decisive, but their length.

It is important to stress that most of the time it is not the unique events that drive the story further; they usually turn out to be false turning points. For example, the visit paid by the neighbour at approx. the 62 minute mark, has no impact on the story itself. It closes the complicating action. But, as it is common in slow cinema films, the turning point does not lead to anything. It neither serves to pull the narrative further, nor holds some secret to be disclosed later on. Although the neighbour's speech seems to be charged with significance and seems to be open for interpretation, Béla Tarr stresses that "This is someone's monologue who just needs some spirit, he's just coming and waiting for his bottle and during all this time he is talking talking talking talking, like someone in the next bar, you know, and that's simple; nothing more."[409]

Here we encounter a clash between the viewer's expectations and the scene's actual meaning. Namely, the viewer with her experience in cinema expects that the neighbour, who is the first visitor to the lonely homestead during the film, will bring something with him or will do something that will push the story forward – this is the traditional function of such a figure in a classic film. At first it seems to be so here, because he talks about the doomed world, which, as we will later come to understand, is the theme of the film. But, over the course of the visit his talk gets more and more confused. This allows us to agree with Béla Tarr that this is just the monologue of a drunken person.[410] It helps to develop a particular atmosphere in the film, but does not advance the story in classical terms.

Again we encounter a turning point with no further implication for the plot - it simply helps to structure the film and to awaken the viewer's interest.

The next turning point is of similar nature – the arrival of the gypsies at precisely 30 minutes after the previous 'turning point'. However, as is usual in slow cinema, this incident which seemingly pushes the story further, actually leads to nothing. Although the Gypsies even threaten to return, this does not come to pass. Similarly, although the daughter receives a book as a gift from the old Gypsy, it also has no effect on further developments. Indeed, Tarr comments that the book is a kind of "anti-Bible", the text written by the film's writer László Krasznahorkai, with references to Friedrich Nietzsche.[411] An experienced film audience though, used to ascribing interpretation to all onscreen events, would be tempted to explain the appearance of the book somehow. But, as it yields no consequences for further plot development, the book is a false

409 Paul Sbrizzi *A Conversation with Béla Tarr* in *Hammer to Nails*, 3. November 2011, available at http://www.hammertonail.com/interviews/a-conversation-with-bela-tarr-the-turin-horse/ (Accessed 04.01.2013).

410 Still, at Mubi there is a long discussion about the meaning of the neighbour´s speech, where they place it next to Samuel Beckett, see http://mubi.com/topics/the-turin-horse (Accessed 14.06.2013).

411 Wikipedia *The Turin Horse* available at http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_Turin_Horse (Accessed 29.11.2012).

dangling cause.

The next turning point, which leads us into the climax, is their leaving home and returning between the 110th minute and 120th minute (this is a case of a lengthy turning point), but also this unique activity has no effect. There is neither an explanation of what the father is afraid of, nor of why they returned. We witness only the activity itself which serves as a kind of attraction bringing the viewer out of his possible lethargy in the expectation that something is going to happen, but these hopes are left unfulfilled.

The climax is formed by the events in day five, as all the lamps and even the embers go out, so that the feeling of impending doom only strengthens. The film's final turning point is the sixth day, when, as we learn, the disaster has attacked the people – also the daughter refuses to eat. It is quite clear then that every 20 or 30 minutes in the film there is an event that mostly functions as a false turning point, but also serves to rouse the audience and to sharpen their already absent attention to details, which become more prominent for the development of the story than the seemingly main events.

If both possibilities for analysing narrative are used together – that of parametric narration and that of the four act structure – it helps to gain a supplementary insight into the possibilities of plot structuring. Both these schemes are at work here, and both have their own means in order to support the other structure. As we have seen, the turning points sharpen the attention for the minor variations in the daily routines, which form the grounding principle of parametric narration. It also means that the four act structure is not only reserved for mainstream Hollywood films – it also operates in a parametric narrative, but with a different goal. Its aim is to restart the viewer's interest in the story.

3.7. Limited number of stylistic choices

The Turin Horse has a very rigorous form, consisting of repeated and unique situations, staged using a limited range of stylistic options.

On the level of the stylistics, the main stylistic tool chosen by Béla Tarr and his team is a long shot with a moving camera, with two significant traits that are repeated during the film and therefore - together with the long shot - constitute the intrinsic norm of the parametric narrative. First of all, there are moments in every episode when the camera stays still for at least half a minute, concentrating on the scene. The second feature is a withdrawal of the camera from the scene or harsh tracking, so that the *hors-champ* - previously unseen part of the space – becomes visible. Jacques Aumont defines the off-screen space as follows:

"… the collection of elements (characters, settings, etc.) that, while not being included in the image itself, are nonetheless connected to that visible space in an imaginary fashion for the spectator." [412]

The zooming out of the camera, thus enlarging the field of vision, occurs three times in the

412 Jacques Aumont, Alan Bergala, Michel Marie, Marc Vernet *Aesthetics of Film*, Austin, 2004, p.13.

film. Most impressively is in shot 11, when the daughter very energetically takes the water bowl and carries it horizontally to the camera axis while the camera zooms out very quickly. In orchestrating such an unusual shot, Béla Tarr creates a tension between the on-screen and off-screen space. But regarded from the point of view of parametric narration, this extreme camera withdrawal is a rare shot in this film, which seems to suggest that in every slow narration film there are episodes wherein the stylistic composition leaves the traditional trajectories behind for some kind of a décor, as David Bordwell would put it. In *Goodbye Dragon Inn* it was the shot sequence between the limping cashier and the wuxia-fighter, in *Fallen* – as will be explained - it is the extended talk scene between Matiss and Alexei. Thus, stylistic elements as "a pure décor" are also possible in films of parametric narration.

The second remarkable trait of Fred Kelemen's camerawork in this film is the lingering of the camera on a scene for several seconds or longer. These moments represent stasis in the otherwise very fluent and abounding camera movements.

For example, the camera lingers on the scene in all the episodes with potato-eating, but this also happens in other situations such as in the shots with one of the characters sitting at the window - one of the recurring motifs. We encounter this situation eight times in the film, but each time the staging of the motif is different. The first time the motif comes up we see the daughter from behind, sitting in front of the window during the first day, while the potatoes are cooking. The second time is during the same day, but after supper, and this time the father has taken her place at the window. The next time is on the evening of the second day, and it's just a short moment within a longer shot. After the camera has depicted the daughter eating potatoes and afterwards cleaning up the table, there is a reframing, so that the father, who sits at the window, is brought into the frame, seen in profile. Then the camera tracks to the left, still keeping the figure of the father in the shot, and discloses the daughter as she puts more wood into the stove. The father seems to have fallen asleep at the window. The next variation of the window-motif comes after their flight. The shot starts outside the house, after several seconds the father and daughter enter the shot. After they have unloaded the carriage, the daughter goes into the house and sits down in front of the window, while the camera stays outside. Slowly the camera zooms in on her and stays for several seconds. In the shot 33 we encounter the motif once again. It starts with a fuzzy image, but, when the camera tracks back it becomes clear that this was a kind of a subjective view out of the window as seen with father's eyes. The camera pauses behind the father; we see his back so that it becomes clear that he is sleeping. Then the camera continues to pull out and we discover the daughter sewing at the table. This plan-séquence also includes a depiction of a potato-eating scene, and closes with a medium long shot showing the father returning to the seat by the window. The seventh variation of this motif comes in the next shot when the daughter tries to create some light. In the shadowy shot the camera registers the father siting at the window.

Although the Fred Keleman's moving camera is very agile, the filmmaker uses only a limited range of choices and completely forgoes the clear-cut editing within one episode.

3.8. Style takes an overhand

As already mentioned, *The Turin Horse* is filmed only in sequenced long shots, using a very mobile camera across the whole film. This stylistic choice splits away from the plot and it cannot be justified either by some concept of realism, or for the rules of a genre or compositional demands.[413] This is then a further argument that in the case of this film, we are dealing with a parametric narration and not just with the art cinema narration.

3.9. The thinking image

Fred Kelemen, cinematographer on *The Turin Horse*, in talking about the film, mentions the notion of the thinking image. "The human being is a moving being - physically and spiritually - not a stationary one", he says. Therefore the camera movement corresponds to the moving thought and is a moving image.[414] This statement is crucial in describing the cinematography style in the film, because the movement of the camera demonstrates the relation between the style and plot (or *syuzhet* as Bordwell calls it). In classic Hollywood films the camera and the entire visual style usually has to bow to plot developments, so that all the stylistic choices explain the story in the clearest way possible. In the case of parametric narration, Bordwell acknowledges that the stylistic system of the film creates arrangements, wherein the style becomes at least equal in importance to the plot.[415] This thinking image of Béla Tarr exemplifies situations where the camera movement is as important as the plot or even more so. The camera in *The Turin Horse* tracks to the right and to the left, zooms in and out – these all are actions that demonstrate a very conscious camera, a "thinking image", which knows where to look at a particular moment. But it also shows that this thinking camera does not bow to the plot's needs, but rather explores the filmic space on its own.

3.10. Serialization

What leads to the statement that *The Turin Horse* represents a truly strong case of parametric cinema is the fact that this limited range of stylistic options are being used to depict only a limited range of activities, so that whereas the parametric narrative occurs on the level of style, an effect of serialization takes place on the level of the depicted events. It is more proof for Bordwell's thesis that parametric narration is only possible in very simple stories.[416] As a consequence, the film has a rigid form, and what Béla Tarr regards as the peak of his artistic achievement. Tarr confesses that before filming, he knew that he wanted to do something that would be "essential cinema".[417] He says: "Each film generates another, getting closer and

413 David Bordwell *Narration in the Fiction Film*, Madison, 1985, p. 280.
414 Robert Koehler *The Thinking Image: Fred Kelemen on Béla Tarr and* The Turin Horse in Cinema Scope, No. 46, March 2011, available at http://cinema-scope.com/cinema-scope-magazine/interview-the-thinking-image-fred-kelemen-on-bela-tarr-and-the-turin-horse/ (Accessed 12.06.2014).
415 David Bordwell *Narration in the Fiction Film*, Madison, 1985, p. 275.
416 Ibid., p. 289.
417 Trevor Johnston *Interview Béla Tarr* in *Time Out London*, available at http://www.timeout.com/london/feature/2712/bela-tarr-interview (Accessed 12.03.2013).

closer to my style, closer to purity and simplicity. So now the style is ready. The work is ready. It's packed. It's done. Anything else is just going to be repetition." It is a powerful justification for his decision that *The Turin Horse* is going to be his last film.

3.11. The unexceptional and the frequency of narration

But now let's look at the above-developed interpretation of *The Turin Horse* as a case of strong parametricity taking into account the issues of narrative theory that have already been discussed in regards to the other case examples.

First is the question of change. As already introduced, the approach of Wolf Schmid is very useful for this endeavour, as it was he who developed a catalogue of criteria which a change of state has to fulfil in order to be labelled as event. The two conditions are facticity (the change actually takes place, it is neither imagined nor desired) and resultativity (it must reach closure).[418] Five properties that have to be present to different degrees are: relevance, unpredictability, persistence, irreversibility and non-iterativity.[419] Even more, Schmid regards the most decisive feature of change as the exceptionality of the event taking place – it must distinguish from the everyday.[420]

As we saw in *The Turin Horse*, all of the onscreen events are quite commonplace everyday routines, and their repetition only underlines their mundane character (and those events that can be deemed somewhat exceptional in the context of the story, like the arrival of the Gypsies, are false turning points). These unexceptional events, such as getting (un-)dressed or sitting at the window, also possess a low level of tellability, thus we can arrive at the conclusion that exceptionality and a high degree of tellability are conditions for a high degree of narrativity. As we encounter neither in *The Turin Horse*, we cannot speak of high degree of narrativity.

András Bálint Kovács – the Hungarian film scholar who has written the most comprehensive book on Béla Tarr to date – attests to his films "the banality, or the unexceptional, everyday character, of the events."[421] As demonstrated above, the events shown onscreen – the dining, the undressing, the sitting at the window – are those to which this study would attest a low level of tellibility.

As the elaborate analysis of the repetitive elements in *The Turin Horse* demonstrates, we find repetition in this film on the story level as well as on the level of discourse. From the standpoint of this research, the most appropriate concept of narrative theory that helps to grasp this phenomenon is that of frequency as developed by Gérard Genette. He uses the term "narrative frequency" in order to describe the relation of repetition between the narrative and the diegesis.[422] He defines following types:

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418 Wolf Schmid *Narrativity and Eventfulness* in Tom Kindt, Hans-Harald Müller (eds.) *What Is Narratology? Questions and Answers Regarding the Status of a Theory*, Berlin, 2003, p. 24.
419 Ibid., p. 26-29.
420 Ibid., p. 24.
421 András Bálint Kovács *The Cinema of Béla Tarr: the Circle closes*, London, 2013, p. 100.
422 Gérard Genette *Narrative Discourse*, Oxford, 1980, p. 113.

1. Narrating once what happened once (singulative narrative);
2. Narrating n times what happened n times;
3. Narrating n times what happened once (repeating narrative);
4. Narrating one time what happened n times (iterative narrative).[423]

Of interest is type 2, which Genette dismisses on the grounds that, in his opinion, it is basically still a singulative narrative because it demonstrates the same relation of frequency between narrative and story as type 1 – "the repetitions of the narrative simply correspond (..) to the repetitions of the story."[424] Thus, he continuous, "the singulative is defined (..) not by the number of occurrences on both sides but by the equality of this number."[425]

However, this study agrees with Markus Kuhn that this type of frequency acquires significance in cases where the author plays with similarity and difference thus creating variations in a series of successive representation of events. The crucial difference between this type and the iterative narrative, as Kuhn points out, is the fact that in the case of iterativity the similarity between different events is stressed, whereas in case of type 2 the differences between them are foregrounded.[426]

As explained above, the repeated actions in *The Turin Horse* are put into a scene using a different staging each time (which, however, may actually go unnoticed by the viewer). Thus in case of *The Turin Horse* we encounter the second type of frequency. But this is an objective statement and one that helps to grasp the narrative structure of the film. If seen from the functionalist perspective, what does it mean for the comprehension of the film?

3.12. Repeated viewings and the Relevance theory

Kovács expresses the opinion that the dramaturgical key that makes slow narration acceptable is suspense.[427] It arises when the narration suggests that something important is going to happen, no matter how slowly the events take place or how insignificant these events are.[428] Kovács continues that visual elements can also acquire suspense, for example, through their aesthetic qualities.[429]

As demonstrated above, the narration in *The Turin Horse* relies fully on false turning points and also on false dangling causes, which, at least during the first viewing of the film, can create suspense in the viewer.[430] Although they do not develop the story further, they still possess a function for the audience – an awakening from the immersion in the image.[431]

It is important to stress once again, that only during the first viewing, when the audience

423 Gérard Genette *Narrative Discourse*, Oxford, 1980, p. 114-116.
424 Ibid., p. 115.
425 Ibid., p. 115.
426 Markus Kuhn *Filmnarratologie. Ein erzähltheoretisches Analysemodell*, Berlin, 2011, p. 229.
427 András Bálint Kovács *The Cinema of Béla Tarr: the Circle closes*, London, 2013, p. 115.
428 Ibid., p. 115.
429 Ibid., p. 116-117.
430 The issue of suspense in slow cinema will be further pursued in the chapter 5.7.
431 The issue of immersion will be approached in more detail in the chapter 5.7.

is not familiar with this narrative strategy of Tarr, this can be of interest for the viewer. One can strongly suspect that most of the audience, after having understood this feature of Tarr´s narrative style – that the supposed turning points lead to nothing - will concentrate their attention fully on the visual level of the film. During the first viewing we concentrate on the repetition as such and the unifying features between the repetitions. Only during subsequent viewings, when we know that the most interesting aspects of the film are the variations in the staging of the repeated events, does this type 2 of frequency (as described by Genette) acquire meaning for the viewer. In the case of *The Turin Horse* we have to highlight the differences between the first and the subsequent (repeated) viewings of the same film – for each the viewer can have another focal interest. Thus, we return to the position of Sperber & Wilson with which this study set out to search for parametricity in slow cinema at the beginning of this chapter. That "Just as the failure to provide relevant information at one level may be used as an ostensive stimulus at another, so the production of an utterance which is apparently uninterpretable at one level may be used as an ostensive stimulus at another one."[432]

We have therefore gone a full circle – the identification of parametricity in *The Turin Horse* demonstrates that a film which, due to its scanty story, can be ascribed to being "l´art pour l´art", and still possess relevance for the viewer. Only during repeated viewings can we fully appreciate this film, because only then we pay the appropriate attention to its stylistics and do what Bordwell regards as the most decisive task of the viewer in watching a film that belongs to the parametric mode of narration - namely, the search for variations. The opinion that Bordwell expressed regarding *Pickpocket* (dir. Robert Bresson, 1959) also has its proof in *The Turin Horse*: it prefers order over meaning.[433] And this is precisely what builds up the function of parametric narration for the audience – that style arises in pursuit of relevance.

432 Deidre Wilson, Dan Sperber *Relevance theory* in Laurence R. Horn & Gregory Ward (eds.) *Handbook of Pragmatics,* Oxford, 2004, pp. 607 – 632, available at http://www.dan.sperber.fr/?p=93 (Accessed 14.07.2013).

433 David Bordwell *Narration in the Fiction Film*, Madison, 1985, p. 306.

4. *Fallen* (dir. Fred Kelemen, Germany, Latvia, 2005) [434]

The chapter about the film *Fallen* is intended as a complemented analysis to the film *The Turin Horse*, because both films exemplify two different approaches to parametric cinema. Béla Tarr´s film, with its rigid form, demonstrates parametricity of the strong order. In Fred Kelemen's film, the impressive staging strategy exists concurrently with a plot whose structures are derived from classic detective films. As expressed above, this differentiation can be made by taking into account the degree of narrativity in both films.

Following is an in-depth description of *Fallen*, with particular attention on the staging strategies that contribute to the parametric mode of this film. The description will be followed by an explanation of the act structure and an ensuing assessment of the film's tellability taking into account the concept of change. The summary will return to the question of parametricity in *Fallen* and attempt to connect the style of the film to its function.

4.1. Description of the film's structure

Setup (Minutes 1 - 18)

The film, shot in black and white, starts with a panoramic view of a river with a bridge in the background. We hear frogs and other sounds of nature. The introductory titles appear. As they come to an end (after some 3 min.), a cut to the next shot of a staircase at night. A man appears and starts to ascend. The camera follows him from behind. Finally, he's on the bridge. He continuous to walk until he sees a woman standing behind a parapet. He hesitates, the woman turns her face towards him, but he continuous to walk. After 45 seconds he hears something falling into the river - a woman's voice cries for help. He turns and runs back to the place where the woman was standing, with the camera behind him. He looks over the parapet; no one is there. The shot lasts for three minutes.

The next shot is a close-up of the man, seen from behind, while he looks over the parapet. Then he goes to the other side of the bridge, and in doing so moves away from the camera. Then he turns back and lights a cigarette. After a moment, he continuous to move in the same direction as before. Then he descends the stairs, whereas the camera stays on the bridge and escorts him until he disappears into the darkness.

Cut to the next shot of an illuminated telephone box in the far right. The lead character comes from the left and goes to the telephone box. The camera stays put. He makes a phone call, but we don't know whom he's calling. This takes some time. After the phone call he comes back and passes on the left of the camera. The camera lingers on the scene. Cut.

The man stands on the bridge with his back to the camera and smokes. Camera pans to the

434 German-Hungarian filmmaker Fred Kelemen (born 1964) is an example that shows that slow cinema did not come into being only during the 21st century. He has been making films since the 1990s, and his style, with long shots and sparse narrative is characteristic to all his films. The film *Fallen* was made during his stay in Latvia. Interestingly, Kelemen was also a cinematographer on the last two films of Béla Tarr: *The Man from London* (*A Londoni Férfi, Hungary*, France, Swiss, Germany, 2007) and *The Turin Horse* (*A Torinói Ló*, Hungary, USA, France, Swiss, Germany, 2009).

left, the man comes to the stairs, he smokes and waits for something. Then he sits down, and after several seconds we see cars arriving on the street beneath the bridge. In the dark and from a distance, only the fire truck is recognizable. The man smokes and looks at the vehicles. Several men step out and come up the stairs. One of the men asks the lead character whether he called them. He nods. The shot ends with both of them descending the stairs and getting in the car. The camera continues to run for several seconds.

The next shot is set in the car, where the police inspector (as we come to understand) delivers a monologue to the lead character about his difficult work, and about different ways of committing suicide. Our leading man does not respond; he seems disinterested. After the monologue, which lasts for three and a half minutes, the inspector asks the man to specify what he saw. He responds that he didn't actually see anything; he just heard a noise and a cry for help. Then the inspector asks for the man's name and here we discover that our lead character is named Matiss Zelcs, born on 04.03.1971. As the inspector sees the divers coming, he invites Matiss to step out of the car. Cut. The duration of this episode is five and a half minutes, and its filmed as a static medium shot. There is a continuity error in this episode – although the scene takes place at night, it is bright daylight outside the car.

In the next shot both Matiss and the inspector get out of the car and meet the divers who say that they did not find anything. The police cars and the fire truck leaves, Matiss walks away from the camera, following the road. For almost a minute the camera films him leaving.

Complicating action (minutes 18 – 41)

The camera focuses on a bright light, then tilts down, and we see Matiss tiredly standing in front of a shelf of archives. A woman's voice urges him to come out as she is going to lock up. He puts some documents into a box, places it on the shelf and walks through the darkened room. The camera follows him. In the next scene he speaks with a colleague and asks where the files for the centre for skin and sexually transmitted diseases are. One might think that this is important information, but this is the first and the last time the centre is mentioned in the film.

As the shot continues, Matiss walks to the shelves and puts some documents in a box. Then he returns to the colleague and signs. After that the camera follows Matiss as he leaves that room and goes into the corridor. Then the camera stays put, whereas Matiss moves away from it and leaves on the far left. The camera lingers on the empty corridor for few seconds. In the next scene Matiss enters his office - a phone is ringing. He disconnects it, the camera zooms out slowly and we see a clock showing five o'clock. Matiss takes his coat, switches off the light and leaves. As before, the camera lingers on the empty shot for several seconds. Cut to the next shot where Matiss comes up onto the same bridge as in the opening sequence. He slowly approaches the place where the woman was standing. Then he goes to the middle of the bridge, lights a cigarette, moves to the other side of the bridge and looks down at the children swimming by the shore. From a distance we hear bits of their dialogues. For more than a

minute Matiss (and the camera over his shoulder) watches the children swimming.
Cut to the next scene - a lonely street at night. After several seconds Matiss steps out of the dark and approaches the camera. Then the camera moves with him to the entrance of a bar; loud music sounds from a distance. After some hesitation, Matiss enters. In the next shot the camera follows Matiss as he comes in and goes to the counter. He orders vodka and asks the waiter whether there was a blond woman in a light coat here yesterday. He claims that she is his girlfriend, and that she did not come home the day before and that he doesn't know where she is. The waiter confirms that she was here, drank a lot, and wrote some letters. He also gives Matiss a handbag that she had left behind. The waiter lists the things in the bag, and here we learn that there is receipt from a photo lab that will serve as a dangling cause for further story development. Matiss asks what happened to the letters, the waiter answers that she threw them away, but they are still in the garbage bin, so Matiss fishes them out. As he does so, the camera reframes, leaving the waiter out of the frame and focuses on Matiss and the letters. Matiss goes to a corner table, sits down and smoothes out the crinkled letters. He takes out his reading glasses. The camera reframes once more; Matiss reads the letters behind a decorative partition. Off-screen we hear the waiter say that they are closing. Matiss gathers his things and leaves. The whole episode is a single shot, and one of the characteristics of Kelemen's style is that he often works with plan-séquences.
Cut to Matiss' flat. He comes in, switches on the light. He takes the letters and the handbag and sits down. He looks through the contents of the purse (camera reframes to a close-up). There is perfume, a chocolate bar, some condoms, lipstick, a pen and an empty envelope. The last thing he takes out is the receipt from the photo lab. Matiss reads the letters out loud. As it gradually becomes clear, this is a love letter to the woman's lover Alexei. A brief summary of the content is as follows: for their love she left her previous life, but now regrets her decision. There is no excuse for her deeds. She feels guilty all the time and does not want to live like this anymore. She bids her farewells. Matiss looks at the receipt and reads the name - Alina. Matiss stands up, goes to a davenport, sits down and looks at the receipt for a long time. Then he puts it into his pocket and remains lost in thought, then falls asleep. All this is filmed in a single take that lasts for eight minutes.

Development (minutes 41 – 59)
Cut to the next shot where we see Matiss sitting in an armchair. Then he gets up and goes to a wall covered with photos (Matiss is at the photo lab). At the counter he receives a packet and leaves. These activities are filmed in one take.
The next shot depicts Matiss' workplace - the archives. During a phone call he examines the slides. Starting with a very long shot, the camera slowly zooms in. As becomes clear from another call, Matiss has to go to a meeting. Cut to the next shot.
Here we see a projected photo of Alina with her family – a son and husband. This is followed by other slides of them looking happy at a party. Then comes a photo depicting Alina, her

husband, and a stranger whom Alina is looking at. In the next photo they clink glasses while her husband looks at her. The next slide is a single shot of the stranger, who looks into the camera. It is followed by a photo of Alina. Then a slide of Alina and the stranger. It seems they are a couple. Then the photos are being repeated from the beginning. The camera zooms out - Matiss smokes and watches the slides. He switches off the projector, goes to the table and puts Alina's things back into the purse. As he takes the envelope, he hesitates a bit. He switches off the lamp and leaves the flat. All this has been filmed in a single shot lasting six minutes.

On the street, Matiss approaches from afar. He comes around a corner into a yard. Cut to the corridor. Matiss comes in, looks around and ascends the stairs. In the next shot we see Matiss as he goes to a door and rings the bell, then knocks twice on the door. A man's voice answers and opens the door. Matiss hands him Alina's purse, but Alexei says that he does not recognize it. Matiss insists that there was an envelope with Alexei's name and address on it. So Alexei asks him where he got the handbag. Matiss lies that he found it on the street. Matiss wants to know to whom the purse belongs to and if she lives at this address, but Alexei misunderstands him. He thinks that Matiss wants some money. Alexei confirms that the woman lives here, and that he will give her the purse when she returns in a day or two. Alexei puts money in Matiss' hand and pushes him away from the door. The camera zooms in on Matiss, then accompanies him descending the staircase. The shot lasts for two minutes. It is very unusual to film dialogue without editing - Kelemen's signature is the use of a plan-séquence, and not the traditional breaking up of the sequence in different shots. Cut to the yard of Alexei's house. Matiss slowly exits; he hides behind a corner. Alexei exits; Matiss follows him.

In the next shot we are in the bar. Matiss comes in and the camera follows him from behind. He goes to the table where Alexei is sitting. Alexei puts money on the table, but Matiss refuses to take it. Alexei asks what he wants. Matiss sits down and tells him that he works at an archive from nine to five. But on one day he found the handbag, what he found unusual and that he is afraid of what has happened to the handbag's owner. He stresses that he didn't take the money – there was no money in the bag. Only an envelope. Matiss asks if she is Alexei's wife. Alexei seems annoyed by the question and answers that they just live together. But she went away two days ago and didn't return. Alexei suggests that Matiss stay out of this. Matiss apologizes and leaves. This long take lasts for three minutes and delivers information which supports our anxiety that something has happened to Alina.

Climax (minutes 59 - 71)

In the next shot we see the slides as printed photos on a wall. The camera pans over them. Matiss looks at them and says aloud "Jealousy". Then he sits down onto the couch and phones the archive. He informs them that he will stay at home today, because he doesn't feel well. Then he takes a gulp from a vodka bottle and looks at the photos on the wall. The camera zooms in on him as if suggesting that it could read Matiss thoughts. Or that we as viewers should image what he's thinking. (This is an apparent gap in the narrative that the viewer has

to fill in, and where every viewer could arrive at different results.)

Cut to the street in the evening. We see the entrance door of a bar. After several seconds Matiss arrives, then stands outside and smokes. After a pause he goes to the window, looks inside and goes into the bar.

A medium close-up of Alexei, sitting at a table and drinking. He tells Matiss that everything is his fault. He and Alina got to know each other when they were children. For him, it was only a game. The camera starts to cruise around Matiss and Alexei sitting at the table and will do so until the end of the shot. Alexei says that he had to go away, but they wrote letters to each other. Alina wrote that she would love him until the end of time, but he never answered her. He got the impression that it was childish. After years, when he came back, she was a married woman, with a child. And then he realized that he needed her. They started to meet and it turned out that she still loved him. As she didn't love her husband, she left him, but he took away her child. When they started to live together, she changed. She closed herself up. The last days with her were terrible – they argued and shouted at each other. She said that he had ruined her life. At this point Matiss agrees – yes, Alexei ruined her life. Matiss states that Alexei, although he says that he loved her, in reality did not. He just played her. He just wanted to possess her, but that's not love. Matiss can't understand how Alexei could force himself into her life. He could never do that. If he had met her, he would have loved her. He would never her hurt. With him she would have been happy. Alexei wants him to shut up, but Matiss stresses that Alexei is responsible for her. Matiss accuses Alexei of having thrown Alina away, he even accuses him of droving her to misery. Alexei has poisoned another person's life. Then Matiss asks the question - what if she has done something to herself? It would be Alexei´s fault. Alexei agrees with Matiss that that would be terrible. After drinking a glass of vodka Alexei agrees that everything is his fault. And then he says he does not want to live anymore. Then, as a surprise, Alexei takes out a gun. Matiss asks him to stop – they will find a solution for the situation together. But Alexei sees no way out. Matiss proposes to drink a bit more and talk about the situation. Alexei could find forgiveness, if he regrets deeply from his heart. Secondly, life still goes on. There are other women. Here Alexei stands up and goes to the toilet. We see him entering the toilet, which is located behind the table. Matiss stays at the table and drinks. Then we hear a shot from the toilet. Matiss looks at the toilet door and remains seated. He slowly realizes what has happened and seems to smile as if he can't believe it. He drinks one more glass of vodka.

This crucial scene lasts for seven minutes, with the whole episode being filmed in one take.

Epilogue (minutes 71 - 83)

A meadow. Matiss crawls, falls, stands up again and crawls to the foreground of the shot. Cut over 180 degrees. Now we see Matiss crawling up to railway tracks. We hear a train passing. In the very next shot we see Matiss coming. He passes ruins of houses. Cut to a Matiss´ close-up, going down a street. We hear church bells. He approaches a church. Cut to a colonnade.

Matiss comes towards the camera. He stops at one of the columns and vomits. Then he comes forward and leans onto another column, then sits down. Suddenly, the door on the left side opens and Alina comes out and exits on the left. Matiss seems to be surprised, he gets up, at first he looks after her, and then follows her.

Cut to a café on a river bank. Alina comes along and enters it. We see her sitting down inside. Afterwards Matiss appears, following her. Then he also enters the café.

Cut to the inside of the café. Matiss sits at the bar, Alina behind him at a table. Now and then he looks back at Alina and their gazes meet. Matiss goes and sits down next to her, but she wants to stand up. Before she leaves, Matiss asks her for forgiveness. She just looks at him and says nothing. Then she stands up and leaves the café, behind a glass door we see her husband and son waiting for her. She hugs the son, takes him by the hand and all three go down the road. Matiss stands up and follows them. On the street, he stops. The camera reframes him in a medium shot. Matiss changes direction and goes to the river. He descends to the water level. Between the sea-gulls we hear a ship's horn. Matiss sits down, then lays down on the rocks. For the first time in the film, nondiagetic music starts. This last shot lasts for almost five minutes.

4.2. Act schema in *Fallen*

In terms of plot, *Fallen* seems to be a very classic example, thus the analysis of the film begins with an explanation of its act structure. *Fallen* consists of five parts of roughly the same length, between 12 and 23 minutes, with the complicating action being the longest.

From the film examples herein, *Fallen* is the one with the strongest plot. So in the setup we encounter the problem – Matiss does not help Alina who consequently jumps from a bridge. Right away Matiss is overcome by guilt, so he calls the police. The setup ends with an obstacle – the divers declare that they did not find anything, but Matiss knows that someone jumped into the river. Although this seems to be a classic setup in which we get to know the lead character Matiss, and we see which event starts the chain of action (the jump into the river), we do not discover Matiss' goals. We simply follow him. We can only guess that that woman's jump and his attitude towards it changes his life somehow. To our surprise, Matiss does not react to the fact that a woman is standing on the bridge and seems to be gathering her courage to jump. As we only witness Matiss seemingly untouched by the events, it will come as a surprise later on, when he starts to gather more and more information about the woman.

It has to be stressed once more, that in comparison to other examples of slow cinema, the activity in *Fallen* that triggers subsequent events is clear-cut and comes at the very beginning of the film.

In the complicating action Matiss begins to search for information about the young woman, and the nearby bar serves as his point of departure. Here he gets her handbag, which serves as a dangling cause and delivers further impetus for the story. Thanks to the handbag he not only gets Alina's love letters, but also the slides depicting her family and her lover Alexei. It is quite a classic complicating action, because here the event which sets the cause and effect chain in

motion – the jump off the bridge – acquires its justification and Alina's character is fleshed out with the help of the love letters.

Through further developments we receive even more information about Alina. We see the slides with her family and her lover, and we encounter Alexei as quite a rude character. But regarding Matiss' goal to get to know Alina, this part is a classic developing action, as these episodes with Alexei serve as obstacles for Matiss in reaching his goals.

The climax part in *Fallen* is also a very classic. According to Kristin Thompson, during the climax all storylines meet in a final resolution and this is what we encounter in *Fallen*. Namely, the storyline about Alina's relationship with Alexei finds closure and so Matiss' quest comes to an end. The episode in the bar is very well constructed, building up the feeling of guilt in Alexei, culminating in his suicide. With each sentence Matiss increases Alexei's despair. Clearly, after the gun shot an act break can be set.

However, the epilogue turns the whole story up-side down and all the mysteries which seemed to have been resolved in the climax surface again. Here the narrative develops some kind of a mise-en-abyme structure that is completely contrary to goal-orientated structure of all the previous parts of the film. The epilogue completely changes the viewer's expectations towards the story. Until the reappearance of Alina, the film suggests to the audience that there will be a final answer to the question what happened to the woman, who she was and why she committed suicide. But the final part of the film turns the gained insights into nothing and encourages asking the questions once more. But note, that if a viewer watches *Fallen* several times, the film still does not offer other paths to solve the mystery as it is, for example, in *The Sixth Sense*, where the viewer already knows the outcome of the story, and at multiple viewings assess the scenes differently. *Fallen* has no such hidden double meanings. Instead, we are left with a lot of questions unanswered. For example, did the jump off the bridge only happen in Matiss´ imagination? Because, as we know, he did not see anything – he just heard the scream. Does he really encounter AlexeI or was it just a dream? The film leaves these questions unanswered, so that we can explain the twist of the narrative with the genre conventions of a detective film.

4.3. *Fallen* as a genre film

The detective film is a subgenre of a crime film, whose two most distinct features are a mysterious event as a point of departure for the story, and a point of view perspective on the events.[435]

The supposed suicide of Alina represents such an event, where the uncertainty is intensified through the fact that neither Matiss nor the viewer actually sees what happened on the bridge. Surely, Matiss, who has the point of view perspective in the film, is not a proper private eye – he just happens to be at the wrong place at the wrong time (in this case we could use the

435 Norbert Grob *Detektivfilm* in Thomas Koebner (ed.) *Reclams Sachlexikon des Films* (3ed edition), Stuttgart, 2011, p. 133.

notion of an "innocent bystander"[436] as proposed by David Bordwell) . But what links him with representatives of this occupation is the urge to solve the problem, and not the gain – maybe in the form of a reward - he could receive.[437]

The melancholic tone of the film and the panchromatic images may lead to a conclusion that *Fallen* is a representative of the *(neo-) noir* tradition, and an attempt can be made to read it as such. For example, the urban setting filmed mostly at night, which is one of the characteristics of *film noir*,[438] applies also to *Fallen*. However, plot complexity which, according to Schwartz, is also one of the qualities of *noir*, is of lesser degree (at least in comparison to the level of plot complexity we have become used to over the last decades - *Memento* (dir. Christopher Nolan, 2000, USA) is surely a prime example). Until the last shot of the film, the plot is actually very simple – Matiss encounters a problem and then uses his deductive skills to solve it as explained in the subchapter about the act schema in the film. In the history of the detective film there are plenty of examples where the protagonist does not succeed in solving all the puzzles he is faced with. Even more, often at the end of the film we are left with unease or a sense of irritation, or even doubt that extends beyond the story itself.[439] The episode in a café at the end of *Fallen*, when Matiss suddenly sees Alina alive and happy with her family, obviously causes irritation not only in him, but also in the viewer. Because the impression we had about Alina's life and her motivations, based on all the previous information that Matiss gathered, turns out to be completely wrong. But even that we cannot say for sure.

It would be very tempting to classify *Fallen* as a representative of the *neo-noir*. However, for the purposes of this project, rather than linking *Fallen* to the *noir* tradition in terms of aesthetics, the highlight is rather on raising the claim that the resemblance to a genre film comes into being, because a high degree of tellability is characteristic for both – *Fallen* and the genre.

4.4. Tellability, events and change

If we take a look at *Fallen* from the point of view of plot organization, then, as was already described regarding the act structure, we encounter the usual dangling causes and turning points around which the action develops. In order to work out the difference between *Fallen* and other slow cinema examples with even more idiosyncratic plot organization, the notion of change should be scrutinized. As noted, for this endeavour the approach of Wolf Schmid, who developed a catalogue of criteria which a change of state has to fulfil in order to be labelled as event, is regarded as useful. The two conditions are facticity (the change actually takes place, it is neither imagined nor desired) and resultativity (it must reach closure)[440]. The

436 David Bordwell, Kristin Thompson *Film Art. Introduction* (10th edition), New York, 2012, p. 334.
437 Georg Seeßlen *Detektive. Mord im Kino*, Marburg, 1998, p.7.
438 Ronald Schwartz *Neo-Noir: The New Film Noir Style from Psycho to Collateral*, Lanham, Toronto, Oxford, 2005, p. X.
439 Norbert Grob *Detektivfilm* in Thomas Koebner (ed.) *Reclams Sachlexikon des Films* (3ed edition), Stuttgart, 2011, p. 135.
440 Wolf Schmid *Narrativity and Eventfulness* in Tom Kindt, Hans-Harald Müller (eds.) *What Is Narratology? Questions and Answers Regarding the Status of a Theory*, Berlin, 2003, p. 24.

five properties that have to be present to different degrees are: relevance, unpredictability, persistence, irreversibility and non-iterativity.[441]

Contrary to the previous example *The Turin Horse*, all of these conditions and properties can be applied to the plot of *Fallen* - Matiss' wish to discover the identity of the woman on the bridge creates the forward impetus, and with each new plot development the significance of the events for the narrated word, its unpredictability, the consequences concerning the narrated word, the irreversibility of events and their singularity only increases. Thus, the changes of state encountered in Kelemen's film can be labelled as proper narrative events possessing a strong degree of narrativity. Thus *Fallen* is a well-made story. However, the exceptionality of *Fallen* comes to the fore when compared to the plots of other slow cinema films. If Schmid's classification of change of state may seem too complex, there is one very simple understanding of change, which has to be kept in mind during the analysis of other slow cinema examples. Namely, according to Schmid, an event "is a special occurrence, something which is not part of everyday routine".[442] Therefore, it is precisely the exceptionality of events depicted onscreen that is the decisive factor strongly connected to the degree of narrativity in slow cinema films. Obviously, events which possess a high degree of tellability, as those in *Fallen*, will always also be exceptional and vice versa. Consequently, they contribute to the enhancement of the degree of narrativity in a film. However, as it was demonstrated during the analysis of the film *Liverpool*, a plot which consists of events with a high degree of tellability, may not always have a high degree of narrativity if the causal links between the events are weak or missing completely. Yet, in *Fallen*, one narrative event yields another, thus building a proper cause-and-effect chain.

But then, in comparison, how can we assess the film *The Turin Horse* within this framework? Everything we see onscreen, except for the arrival of the Gypsies and the visit of the neighbour, belongs to everyday routine, which, according to narrative theory is the biggest enemy to story. In terms of narrative theory, sitting at the window, doing laundry, cooking and eating as such do not possess any signs of tellability (if such activities were to be depicted in mainstream cinema, they would serve as an introduction to or the background of an Event). Even more, these tasks lack any exceptionality. Additionally, the plot events follow one another building a linear structure resulting from the daily routine of the farmstead mostly without causal links. Consequently, the story in *The Turin Horse* has a very low level of narrativity. In this regard Tarr´s film differs decisively from *Fallen*, which, as argued, is a classic case of a genre film. The question arises - what makes film critics assign *Fallen* to slow cinema, and even more, to parametric mode? As noted in the description, almost all of the episodes are shot using a single take, and the sequence shots are considerably lengthy.

The peak is reached in the episode in the bar, when Matiss' reproaches prompt Alexei to commit

441 Wolf Schmid *Narrativity and Eventfulness* in Tom Kindt, Hans-Harald Müller (eds.) *What Is Narratology? Questions and Answers Regarding the Status of a Theory*, Berlin, 2003, p. 26-29.
442 Ibid., p. 24.

suicide. This crucial scene lasts for seven minutes, with the whole episode being filmed in one take with very expressive camera movements. During the biggest part of the episode the camera cruises around both men sitting and talking, so that the camera movement does not have a diegetic motivation and thus becomes an independent member of the conversation. Here the stylistic traits of the film do not obey the narrative development. Similarly as in *Goodbye Drag Inn*, we encounter a turning point that functions on the level of film's visual design. But contrary to that film, where such a turning point was a very short episode (the cashier's face cross cut with some scenes from the film *Dragon Gate Inn*) for the sake of style with no further implications, in *Fallen* the style manifests itself as an independent feature throughout the film, culminating in the episode under discussion. As per David Bordwell, the episode in *Goodbye Dragon Inn* is purely decorative with no further implications in the film.[443] But in the case of *Fallen* we encounter the parametric mode of weak order - here the parametricity oscillates between more and less parametric episodes, where the story has the upper hand.

4.5. Types of parametric mode

In *Narration in the Fiction Film* Bordwell states that two types of the parametric mode are possible: the sparse and the replete mode. In the sparse version "the film limits its norm to a narrower range of procedures".[444] In replete mode the filmmaker creates "an inventory or a range of paradigmatic options."[445]

Interestingly, Bordwell has also described the possible relationships the stylistic structures can have with the plot (or *syuzhet* as he calls it). He outlines three types: a) style may completely and constantly dominate the *syuzhet*; b) the style may be seen as equal in importance to the *syuzhet*; c) stylistic structures possess their autonomous function, but at the same time they both support and challenge the plot.[446] In most films where the parametricality appears, "*syuzhet* and fabula shift in importance."[447]

For the parametricity in the case example *Fallen* both aspects – the *suyzhet* and the fabula as Bordwell uses the terms – are important, because they display a deep mutual bond and exhibit an example where the relationship between the style and the plot is far more complicated as supposed by Bordwell. Surprisingly, contrary to intuition after the first viewings of the film that suggested in *Fallen* we have to deal with a replete version of parametric cinema, a more attentive viewing led to the conclusion that the catalogue of the stylistic features of this film consists of precisely one element. Namely, an extensive long take, sometimes with a moving camera and sometimes using a static camera. However, what unites them all is the fact that the camera always sticks to Matiss and follows him in all his deeds. Here lies the crux of the issue. Namely, the camera accompanies him all the time regardless of whether Matiss takes

443 Jacob Isak Nielsen *Bordwell on Bordwell: Part IV - Levels of Engagement* in *16:9*, February 2005, available at http://www.16-9.dk/2005-02/side11_inenglish.htm (Accessed 3.02.2014).
444 David Bordwell *Narration in the Fiction Film*, Madison, 1985, p. 285.
445 Ibid., p. 285.
446 David Bordwell *Narration in the Fiction Film*, Madison, 1985, p. 287-288.
447 Ibid., p. 288.

part in events to which we can assess a high degree of narrativity or a low one. Or when, during the long take, something that can be labelled as an event (of whatever degree) takes place. As Matiss is in the shot all the time (except, for example, in Alina's photos), we have to redefine the notion of post/pre-action lag. There are no moments when "nothing happens", because we see Matiss all the time. Only in the due course of the shot do we encounter moments when some kind of a narrative takes place, and these moments interchange with moments when, with Matiss still in the shot, the narrative degree is very low. For example - (at the beginning of the film) when Matiss walks along the bridge (low level of narrativity) and suddenly hears someone crying for help (high degree of narrativity). Similarly as in *Goodbye, Dragon Inn*, *Fallen* contains episodes with the main character going from point A to B, that create scenes with a low level of narrativity. Coming back to David Bordwell, this film is obviously an example where "*syuzhet* and fabula shift in importance."

In comparison, in *The Turin Horse* from the first glance we can detect sparse parametricity, because the visually arresting qualities of the film are caused by long take cinematography, and all the other devices are subordinate to it. It is a clear case for Bordwell's claim that in parametric cinema the viewer's main task is to notice stylistic differences and to recognize their exceptionality. But, as if foreseen by Bordwell, this visual rigour is used in order to tell a very simple story, which, as explained above, possesses no signs of exceptionality.

4.6. Long take in cinema studies

As often mentioned, slow cinema's most prominent stylistic feature is the use of an extensive long take. The influential American film critic Brain Henderson, in his famous article *The long take*, defines it as "a single piece of unedited film which may or may not constitute an entire sequence"[448]. The long take enables mise-en-scène. Traditionally, the discussion about the long take quotes Andre Bazin, who favours it for its temporal realism: "the long take's time is the event's time"[449]. Similarly, Mary Ann Doane discusses the properties of the long take, but her position is quite the opposite to that of Bazin. She states that "In the long take, the cinema incarnates the meaninglessness of a lived reality. The cut […] stabilizes the image."[450] In these ideas she actually refers to the standard text about the long take – Pier Paolo Pasolini´s *Observations on the Long Take*. As Pasolini himself put it:

"The substance of cinema is […] an endless long take, as is reality to our senses for as long as we are able to see and feel. […]. But as soon as montage intervenes […], the present becomes past."[451]

Henderson, in criticizing Bazin, draws our attention to the fact that it's not the long take alone that is important, but the use of both – the long take and editing within the sequence, because

448 Brian Henderson *The Long Take* in Bill Nichols (ed.) *Movies & Methods*, Vol. 1, Berkeley, 1976, p. 315.
449 Ibid., p. 315
450 Mary Ann Doane *The Emergence of Cinematic Time. Modernity, Contingency, the Archive*, Cambridge, Mass., 2002, p. 105.
451 Pier Paolo Pasolini *Observations on the Long Take* in *October*, Vol. 13, Summer 1980, p.5.

the long take is not in itself an artistic device but is a part of a shooting style and building sequences.[452] A more detailed analysis of this issue, from the vantage point of statistical style analysis, will be offered in the chapter about the application of Cinemetrics to the case examples.

Historically the long take (connected with camera movement and depth of field) was a favoured strategy from the 1940s until the beginning of the 1970s but after that, "only 'off-Hollywood' directors like Woody Allen and the younger independents" chose this artistic strategy.[453] For the genealogy of slow cinema the use of the long take is relevant across the various New Cinemas and new waves that were born in the 1960s, but it must be kept in mind, as David Bordwell states, that only Michelangelo Antonioni and the late Carl Theodor Dreyer used it as their artistic signature.[454]

Here we should highlight the functional aspect of this stylistic tool. For this endeavour the position offered by Tiago Magalhães de Luca seems to be the most fruitful. In his dissertation, *Realism of the Senses: A Tendency in Contemporary World Cinema*, he speaks of "the hyperbolic application of the long take" in his case examples, which actually coincide with the films usually counted as slow.[455] de Luca hails the result as a mode of realism in which "spatial and temporal integrity is preserved to hyperbolic extremes. From the functionalist perspective, narrative interaction in these films is dissipated in favour of contemplation and sensory experience."[456] Thus "the spectator is invited to adopt the point of view of the camera and protractedly study images as they appear on the screen in their unexplained literalness."[457] He goes on to explain that in such situations the reality is emphasized as a primarily perceptual, sensible and experiential phenomenon.[458] The wish herein is to further develop the point made by de Luca about the effects the long take and the (sometimes unbearable) duration may trigger for the audience.

4.7. Function of duration in narrative

The beginning of the chapter addressed the question of whether the search for relevance and the search for ostensive stimuli in the form of unusual stylistic developments constitute enough activity during the viewing. It's productive to once again return to the question of function in narrative communication as mentioned in the introduction with reference to the Proteus principle.

The Proteus principle, suggested by Meir Sternberg, states that one stylistic feature can

452 Brian Henderson *The Long Take* in Bill Nichols (ed.) *Movies & Methods*, Vol. 1, Berkeley, 1976, p. 316.
453 David Bordwell *Figures traced in Light: On Cinematic Staging*, Berkeley, 2005, p. 150.
454 David Bordwell *Figures traced in Light: On Cinematic Staging*, Berkeley, 2005, p. 152.
455 Tiago Magalhães de Luca *Realisms of the Senses. Tendency in Contemporary World Cinema*, University of Leeds, 2011, available at http://etheses.whiterose.ac.uk/1760/ (accessed May 2013), p.21.
456 Ibid., p. 23.
457 Ibid., p. 24.
458 Ibid., p. 21-22.

generate various effects and that one effect can be prompted by different stylistic features.[459] In case of *Fallen* we clearly encounter one feature – long takes with a very extensive duration – which generates several effects. First of all: parametricity. Secondly, it is a tool for telling a story and, thirdly, it prompts emotions and sensual experiences in the viewer.

As already quoted, Bordwell sees the search for decisive stylistic features, their development and application throughout the film, as the most important activity for the viewer during the screening of a film belonging to the parametric mode. In the case of *Fallen*, in parallel to the registration of the film's parametricity, the viewer develops his curiosity about the mysterious events surrounding Alina, and tries to solve the puzzle together with Matiss. However, the fact that the film's style is dominated by very extensive takes that are not always narratively grounded therefore emphasizes duration as the most impressive and the most utterly felt effect of the film. Thus, in parallel to plot developments and to stylistic variations, the effect of the duration of the shot also forms a very important experience for the viewer watching *Fallen*.

A side remark is required here. Namely, that the issue of duration has usually been approached by applying narrative theory. As Greek film scientist Eleftheria Thanouli has observed, most film theorists welcome the work of Gérard Genette on time-relations in literary narratives as a useful tool for identifying this phenomenon in cinematic narratives as well.[460] In general terms we can speak of a fabula duration, a *syuzhet* duration or the so-called "projection time" as identified by Bordwell.[461] On a more limited scale, duration can manifest itself in four forms as identified by Genette: ellipsis, summary, scene and pause.[462]

However, in this case, the handling of the notion of duration in narrative theory as one of the categories of time is of lesser interest.[463] Although Genette's work regarding speed (duration) in a narrative may be of interest in the case of slow cinema[464], if the focus remains on the functionalist perspective of the narrative, then such an "objectivist definition" as Sternberg names Genette's position in another context[465] is of less use. Instead, using Sternberg once again, "you can't bring narrative's sequences into relation, far less keep shifting that relation from one work or reading or moment to another, except in a purposive light."[466]

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459 Meir Sternberg *Proteus in Quotation-Land: Mimesis and the Forms of Reported Discourse* in *Poetics Today*, Vol. 3, No. 2 (Spring, 1982) p. 148.

460 Eleftheria Thanouli *Post-Classical Cinema: An international Poetics of Film Narration*, London, 2009, p. 114.

461 More on this issue see David Bordwell *Narration in the Fiction Film*, Madison, 1985, p. 74.

462 Monika Fludernik *Time in Narrative* in David Herman, Manfred Jahn, and Marie-Laure Ryan (eds.) *Routledge Encyclopedia of Narrative Theory*, London, 2005 p. 609.

463 An overview about the issue of time and cinema can be found in Eleftheria Thanouli *Post-Classical Cinema: An international Poetics of Film Narration*, London, 2009, p. 113 et seqq.

464 Interestingly, the films of slow cinema mostly fall into the realm of equivalence – wherein the duration of fabula, syuzhet and screen time are equal. Eleftheria Thanouli, although speaking in particular about the post-classical cinema, remarks that such equivalence throughout the whole film is rather unusual and mostly occurs in scenes that are shot using long takes. Eleftheria Thanouli *Post-Classical Cinema: An international Poetics of Film Narration*, London, 2009, p. 116.

465 Meir Sternberg *Narrativity: From Objectivist to Functional Paradigm* in *Poetics Today*, 31:3 (Fall 2010), p. 605.

466 Meir Sternberg *Narrativity: From Objectivist to Functional Paradigm* in *Poetics Today*, 31:3 (Fall 2010), p. 638.

With this quotation from Sternberg the circle closes - as mentioned at the beginning of the chapter, Sperber and Wilson consider style as a demonstration of relevance. Thus, the filmmaker using certain stylistic devices has also considered the effects they can have on their audience. Although the present study is not focused detecting links between a filmmaker's personality and the influence it has on his films, a quotation from an interview with Fred Kelemen in which he pinpoints the fact that for him it is important to give the audience time to think of themselves is very fitting:

> For me it's very important to give an audience the feeling for time, and to recognise and experience time on itself (…) Also I believe there is a certain moment when physical time transforms into metaphysical time, when the screen looks back to you, you are not only focussed on the screen, you start to think about yourself, things which you experience in your life which are similar with what you see on screen. So you are very much walking inside yourself, for example, when you walk with someone on a screen.[467]

This idea of Kelemen's exemplifies the claim that in slow cinema the interpretation is not always the most suitable strategy in coming to grips with these peculiar films. In comparison, fast-paced Hollywood cinema or newscasts give information only, but long takes give you an experience, which is very individual. This is the very quality of slow cinema. This opinion of Kelemen relates to Lisandro Alonso who also underscores the meaning of the viewer in the process of understanding the film. During the analysis of the case example *Liverpool* this project proposed the concept of presence as a possibility in how to gain access to the quirky narratives of slow cinema. In conclusion about parametricity, this study again emphasizes that some kind of the utterance (according to the Relevance theory) or interpretation (Bordwell) or observation of the stylistic variety (Bordwell), are not the only possible routes to be taken during the viewing. The affective dimension has to also be considered (as Kelemen subsumed under the notion of "experience" in the quotation above). Thus, a single stylistic feature can generate different effects on the viewer. The two closing case studies of this survey will be dedicated to these "other" effects slow films can have on their audience. Whereas the film *Blissfully Yours* highlights the different affective effects a film can generate, *Colossal Youth* underlines the impossibility of communication that can also arise during the screening of such a film.

467 Robert Chilcott *There Must Be an Outside*, October 2005, available at http://www.fredkelemen.com/html/interviews/interviews.html (Accessed 06.10. 2012).

5. *Blissfully Yours* (dir. Apichatpong Weerasethakul, Thailand, 2002)[468] – moods, haptic experience and redefinition of immersion

The next example comes from a country that has only recently been placed on the cinematic map. That is due to filmmaker Apichatpong Weerasethakul, whom film critics hail as one of the most important members of slow cinema.

James Quandt, in the introductory chapter to his book about Apichatpong, underlines the challenge that faces film critics in trying to describe his films. This is the reason why the most frequently used trope for his work is the "mysterious object"[469], which actually is a reference to his first feature-length film, *Mysterious Object at Noon* (2000).

This position seems to justify the claim that it will be a difficult undertaking for a researcher to grasp *Blissfully Yours* in theoretical terms. As in the previous chapters, a concise description of events happening onscreen will be offered. Unlike in the other previously analyzed slow cinema examples, every episode in *Blissfully Yours* is made up of several shots, and therefore it isn't that shot that is decisive but rather the episode. For that reason the episode as a whole is the proper criterion in the explication of the film's structure. Even more, the thesis herein is that the atmosphere is the leading narrative principle of *Blissfully Yours*, and a change in tone may coincide not only with the beginning of a new episode, but the entire act. Obviously the fact that a new emotional tone is prevailing in a new episode is nothing new or unusual. The difference in *Blissfully Yours* is the importance of atmosphere. Namely, as proper narrative developments may be lacking, the atmosphere assumes the role of a kind of a storyteller. Thus in the description of film's plot, the acts are already structured around the prevailing atmosphere or tone they contain.

The description will be followed by an analysis of the film's construction principles in regards to its degree of narrativeness and the role of atmosphere within it. This will be followed by an attempt to connect the sensuality and atmosphere that dominate the film with possible audience reactions, expressing the view that in *Blissfully Yours* the immersion into the image is the foregrounding reception strategy of the film.

Jens Eder, pondering on how to describe and analyze the affective reactions to a film, suggests a three-step model. It will always encompass three components: a description of the affective reactions to a film; a systematic description of the properties of the film; and a linking hypothesis.[470] However, Eder acknowledges the complexity facing the researcher as the

468 Apichatpong Weerasethakul was born in Bangkok, Thailand in 1970. The film under discussion actually comes from the early years of his oeuvre – it was his second full-length feature, but it already received international recognition resulting in the *Un Certain Regard* prize at the Cannes Film Festival in 2002. His greatest success to date is the *Palme d´Or* received at Cannes in 2010 for the film *Uncle Boonmee Who Can Recall His Past Lives,* which is also his best-known film.

469 James Quandt *Resistant to Bliss*. *Describing Apichatpong* in James Quandt (ed.) *Apichatpong Weerasethakul*, Vienna, 2009, p. 14.

470 Jens Eder *Analyzing Affective Reactions to Films. Towards an Integrative Model* in *SPIEL (Siegener Periodikum zur Internationalen Empirischen Literaturwissenschaft)*, Vol. 22, 2003, p. 274.

connections between the filmic structures and the affective reactions elicited by an artwork are loose, associative, context-dependent and/or probabilistic.[471] This is also an issue concerning the film in question.

The first problem confronting a researcher intending to scrutinize *Blissfully Yours* is the unpredictability of the audience's emotional responses. Obviously, if in cases of tightly plotted Hollywood narratives the viewer's reactions are calculated because the film is designed to elicit particular responses, then all the quirky narratives usually subsumed under art cinema offer no path that would anticipate certain reactions.

Even more, suggestions herein regarding which aspects of affective forms of experience are most prominent in *Blissfully Yours* are sparse for several reasons. First of all, *Blissfully Yours* invites us to incorporate into our film analysis vocabulary such terms as immersion and affective experience, terms that cinema studies have started to pay attention to only during the last decades. One might think that the research on which this study relies would be manageable. The situation is even worse – it seems there aren't any studies on these subjects that take art cinema as case examples. Thus, this study can only offer speculations based on subjective experience with no authoritative quotations from respectable sources that would substantiate the claims.

As mentioned, *Blissfully Yours* is a very quirky example within world cinema. The point of departure is a statement by Carl Plantinga, who assumes that four aspects work together in the film viewing experience: mood, emotion, bodily responses and cognition.[472] The contention herein is, however, that in *Blissfully Yours* the first three factors are fore-grounded in a way that is unusual even for art cinema, thus leaving even experienced film critics stunned. This effect has been achieved by purposefully disseminating lengthy episodes with a low density of emotional information (speaking in terms of Greg M. Smith) across the film, which at first might sound contradictory. Additionally, these episodes are either eventless or they contain events of a low level of narrativity. What we are left with are a lot of very moody episodes that, as a bodily effect, elicit immersion into the fictional world. And to end – a suggestion of how to connect the hypothesis on the reception of *Blissfully Yours* with the Relevance theory.

5.1. Description of the film's structure:

Setup (Minutes 1 – 49)

The film begins with an episode at a doctor's office. A young man and two women – one younger, one older – have come to the doctor because of a rash on the man's skin. While the doctor does a blood test, the younger woman leaves. The older woman tries to get a health certificate for the young man, but the doctor refuses to issue it because the man has no ID.

471 Jens Eder *Analyzing Affective Reactions to Films. Towards an Integrative Model* in *SPIEL (Siegener Periodikum zur Internationalen Empirischen Literaturwissenschaft)*, Vol. 22, 2003, p. 283.
472 Carl Plantinga *Art Moods and Human Moods in Narrative Cinema* in *New Literary History*, Vol. 43, Nr. 3, Summer 2012, p. 460.

The older woman does not want to leave the room until the doctor issues a certificate, but she refuses to break the law. While in the next shot we see the doctor in conversation with the next patient about a hearing aid, the older woman and the man leave through the door in the back. The camera stays in the doctor's room observing the conversation between the doctor, her next patient and his daughter. The shot ends in the middle of a sentence.

In several shot throughout the film the older woman and the man head to the market. As somebody calls out to the older woman, we learn her name is Orn; the younger woman is the girlfriend of the young man.

In several shots we witness Orn and the young man arriving at a government office, which, as it turns out, is the workplace of Sirote – Orn's husband. We also learn that the young man is called Min. Sirote criticizes Orn for failing to get a health certificate for Min. In this episode we learn the name of the young girl - it is Roong, and she regularly gives money to Orn, but we never learn why.

The conversation turns to Orn's wish to have another child, but Sirote seems reluctant as the second child could drown as the first did.

Min sits on a bench and a stranger proposes to eat together, but Min cannot talk to him. When Orn comes, the stranger ceases to bother Min. Orn leaves through the door on the left. Sirote and a colleague enter, and he introduces Min as his nephew from the countryside.

At this point it should be noted that Min has yet to talk. As we learn from the conversation at the doctor's office the young man cannot answer questions himself because of his sore throat. But in the due course we understand that he probably doesn't talk in order to hide his bad Thai, because he is probably illegally in Thailand.

A panoramic close-up of different tubes and jars of creams. Orn and Sirote's colleague sit at a table chopping vegetables. In a close-up we see how Orn mixes vegetables into the cream.

When Sirote comes in and asks what the two of them are doing, Orn offers him a taste of the vegetable and cream mix and he accepts. We learn that Orn is to visit Roong at the factory. The episode at Sirote's office lasts for ten minutes.

In two shots we witness Orn and Min leaving the building and getting into a car. Orn applies cream on Min's arm.

The car starts to move and the camera is positioned from behind so a ghost-ride effect occurs, lasting a minute and a half. After two quite short shots inside the car there is another ghost-ride shot for half a minute, in which we see Sirote's colleague Tommy approaching on a motorcycle. In several shots he tries to catch Orn's attention – he has a plastic bag with her vegetables. Then comes a shot with the camera positioned in front of the car looking ahead. This ghost-ride-like shot lasts for almost a minute. Then a cut to the interior of the car, followed by another ghost-ride shot from the front of the car, until the car arrives at a gate that opens. James Quandt underlines the aggressive mode of this episode, which is underlined by Orn saying "I feel like

hitting someone",[473] but it can also be understood as her reaction to the crazy motorcyclist in front of her (Tommy, whom she does not recognize), who disturbs her driving.

As per usual in Apichatpong films, the reason why Tommy tries to catch Orn's attention isn't explained. So the narrative function of the shots is not of prime concern here.

At the factory gate a guard checks Orn's driver's license. Whereas Orn can drive on the territory, Min has to stay at the guard house.

A close-up of a hand painting a gypsum figure. Then Roong stands up and leaves. After a talk with a manager she gets the afternoon off, but he warns her not to bring the Burmese man (Min) to the factory again. Roong describes him as Orn's gardener. As at the beginning of the film when Min was presented as Sirote's nephew from the countryside, his real origin becomes more and more obscure. It seems that we cannot rely on what we're told, and have to rather rely on the image. Min's silence seems to support this hypothesis.

In the parking lot the women quarrel over Roong's very expensive cream, which Orn has now destroyed by putting vegetables in it. Roong gives Orn some money. Orn leaves the factory on the motorcycle, while Roong and Min go by car.

In the car, they hold their hands. These images alternate with ghost-ride shots of scenery outside the car's window, or from the back of the car. The episode lasts for four minutes and while the camera films the view from the front window, the opening titles of the film appear to the sound of a Thai pop song. During the sequence there is an interchange of different shots of the car's interior and ghost-ride shots of the passing scenery. When the opening titles and pop song are over, the car continues its journey with a view from the front window, but in the off-screen we hear Min's voice explaining that he wanted to bring Roong here - because she had a bad day.

Complicating action (minutes 50 - 70) - Pastoral

After stepping out of the car, Min and Roong cross a meadow into the jungle where Min undresses because the clothing causes him pain. They continue to walk through the jungle for approx. eight minutes until they reach a spot with a view. There they set a picnic cloth.

Min eats unknown berries; Roong joins him and they sample some other berries, then they kiss and begin making out but have to stop because Min's skin hurts. They continue to eat berries; Roong stops Min's approaches.

The couple return to the spot on the cliff and start to picnic. Superimposed writing appears over the image and Min's voice in the off speaks what is written. He explains that Roong taught him Thai. After another minute of picnicking a superimposed drawing appears depicting a girl with a flower (?) – it disappears after several seconds.

The picnic cloth is overun by ants, so the couple decides to try another spot.

473 James Quandt *Resistant to Bliss. Describing Apichatpong* in James Quandt (ed.) *Apichatpong Weerasethakul*, Vienna, 2009, p. 49.

Development (minutes 71 - 81) Intercourse in the woods

Quite a long static shot shows Orn having sex with her lover Tommy, which alternates with Orn's subjective point of view on the sun shining behind the tree leaves. Tommy throws a used condom away. Thus we can infer that Orn's desire to have children is not going to be fulfilled. Shots of silence and the couple resting alternate with Orn's subjective point of view of the sun behind the tree branches. Tommy begins to satisfy Orn by hand, but is disrupted by the sound of his motorcycle – he runs away to chase after the thief. Orn starts to dress and hears gunshots in the distance. Fade out.

Climax (minutes 82 - 119) River sequence.

A close-up of a picnic table with a drawing of a couple superimposed on the image. Min and Roong have found a new spot next to a stream and continue to picnic. Min dreams of finding a job in Singapore. He also misses his family. Roong claims that she would be happier if Orn disappeared. No one likes Orn, she says. She is phoney and "a mental case."

The couple sits on the banks of a stream with their legs touching the water – there is the sound of running water. A drawing appears with text stating that a boyfriend hit Roong and she cried. The couple continues to picnic.

Orn walks through the jungle, but after a while the shot is overlaid by a drawing that shows Orn bathing. She continues to wander through the woods. Orn's walk lasts for four minutes. In comparison to Roong and Min's stroll, the jungle now looks hostile and cramped. Orn picks up a stick (in order to protect herself?).

In an almost minute-long shot we see Roong giving Min a blow job on the bank of the stream. Orn spies on the couple from behind a bush, but then joins them. Roong does not seem pleased. Orn explains that she was looking for Keng at army air base (Keng is a character from Apichatpong's later film *Tropical Malady*!), but got scratched up. Roong pities her and invites her to come into the water. Orn hesitates, but Roong assures her that she is not going to kidnap (sic!) her. The interpretation of the scene as an intended murder is supported by the fact that as Roong takes Orn by hand into the water Min calls out to her as if sensing that something bad might happen. (Viewers who do not support the murder-thesis can regard Min's call as a normal act of attention towards Roong.)

Roong takes Orn by the hand and the camera concentrates on the hands of both women; off-screen Roong encourages Orn not to be so tense and brings her deeper and deeper into the stream. Roong even says that there is nothing to be afraid of (sic!).

Then, suddenly, the atmosphere of the episode changes – the menacing tone disappears as Roong dives into the water, laughs and splashes Orn. But Orn still looks mistrustfully at Roong. The girl suggests Orn dip into the water and as she does so Orn starts to smile, so that any fears of a murder fade away completely. Further development suggests that Roong even cares about Orn when she asks what Orn is doing when she wants to go deeper into the water.

Orn starts to swim and both women laugh at each other. A careless, joyful atmosphere spreads.

Then Roong suddenly slips under water, but comes up right away assuring us that everything is alright – this is another point in the plot when fears about a character's fate could arise in the audience.

Orn invites Min into the water to have a look at his skin, but Roong goes to the shore to get the tube of cream. The women apply the cream to Min and bathe him in the water. Min expresses fear but Roong assures him that he shouldn't be afraid.

As Min floats on the water the camera tilts to the trees on the shore, and in the off-screen Min reads a letter to his wife, Nyo. It seems that this takes place in the future. He tells her that he has a job as an electrician in Papua New Guinea. He asks how Roong is doing. Seeing kids on the street reminds him of his own kids, he hopes to come back, he will leave soon. As so often in this film, the letter ends in the middle of the sentence.

The three characters come back to the shore and start to dress. Roong puts on Min's trousers. Orn insists on going home but Roong tells her to stay a while because she is having fun.

Roong and Min lie on the shore and snooze. Orn sits next to the picnic cloth. At first she just gazes into the water, but then she clears the cloth of food by dropping it into the water and lies down. For no obvious reason she starts to cry. Once again the image is open to interpretation. Is she thinking about her lost child or of the problems in conceiving a new one? Or maybe she misses her lover whose fate is unknown at this point?

The shot of a crying Orn lasts for almost a minute. Then she stands up and checks the contents of Roong's purse. After finding nothing of interest in it, she then finds cigarettes next to the bags and lights one.

Roong takes Min's penis out of his pants and plays with it – this lasts for almost a minute and a half.

Orn continues to smoke, then she lays down. Roong snoozes besides Min; this static shot continues for four minutes.

Epilogue (minutes 119 – 122) - End of paradise.

A point of view shot of blue skies with clouds for twenty seconds followed by a landscape with misty woods and a clouded sky displayed for almost a minute. The next shot is a very short take on Roong's weeping face while looking into the camera. The film ends just like that, like in the middle of a sentence, which we have witnessed before as the director's strategy.

The closing titles begin with an overview of what has happened to the characters. Min is in Bangkok waiting for a job at a casino. Roong is back with her boyfriend (of whom we know nothing but that he hit her), Orn continues to work as an extra in Thai movies.

5.2. Building a four-act scheme without a proper cause-and-effect-chain

Blissfully yours is a film that brings the four-act scheme to the edge and discloses its weaknesses in regards to art cinema narration. Sure the film has a structure of different parts, but only the set-up, although immensely expanded, corresponds to the classical scheme as described

by Thompson. In it, as is usual in the first part of a film, we encounter main characters in their characteristic situations and learn about their anger and needs. But, as mentioned, Apichatpong leaves many narrative paths open - for example, at Sirote's office a colleague of his touches Min with undoubtedly homosexual intentions, but the film does not pursue this situation further.

At the same time, episodes that depict sensual situations or immersion into the image are granted a very long screen time, such as the ride in a car or characters' hands touching underwater (at the approx. 96th, 100thand 106th minutes).

In comparison to standard cases, Apichatpong's films are a kind of magic box as very few episodes develop from another. In the set-up there are only two verbal hints about what the characters are going to do next (Roong leaves the doctor's office because she has to go to work; Orn mentions to Sirote that they are going to visit Roong at the factory), so that an overarching storyline can be established. But mostly the episodes follow each other with no particular causes linked to previous episodes. The film is mainly an alignment of episodes that do not develop according to a cause-and-effect chain, but rather through developing emotions and feelings, showcasing a particular situation, varying the atmosphere or by absorbing the audience into a trance-like activity.

It will become obvious later on that giving information away without properly explaining it is one of Apichatpong's narrative strategies. The director likes creating riddles.

In this study's opinion the credit sequence ends the film's prolonged set-up, in which we encounter the main characters in their characteristic settings – Min at the hospital, Orn at her husband's office and making her mysterious cream, and Roong at her workplace. Although on one hand we discover important facts about the characters (for example that Min needs a health certificate), at the same time the director provides us with information which leads us astray (the confusion about whether Min is Sirote's nephew or Orn's gardener) or leave us disoriented (What is the purpose of Orn's hand-made cream? Why does Tommy follow Orn? Why does Roong have to give money to Orn and Sirote?)

As mentioned, unlike in other slow cinema films the shot is not decisive in *Blissfully Yours*, but rather the episode or even a larger part of narrative. It seems that the film's narrative parts can be subsumed under a theme. So the complicated action corresponds to the pastoral mood with the young couple in the jungle, while the development matches the sexual intercourse between Orn and Tommy in the woods, but the film reaches its climax in the river sequence and ends with the end of the paradise looming during the last few minutes of the film. The tone changes from easy happiness (pastoral - complicating action), to body-bucking sex (development), then from homicidal resentment to sweet romance in the river episode (climax), and ends with a kind of melodramatic tone in the epilogue. These differences between the parts are what drive the story further, not the cause-and-effect chain. Each part, except the set-up, absorbs the viewers into the image and every change in tone pulls them out of the trance, but only for a short while as the subsequent part absorbs the viewer again.

The sound of flowing water and singing birds fosters a possible immersion into the image and builds up a kind of trance where the overall atmosphere of the situation is decisive rather than the particular action onscreen.

After the threatening episode where there was a fear that Roong could drown Orn, each following episode contains less and less action so that the story comes to a halt. It finishes with emptiness – the static image of the landscape that can be interpreted as a stop.

In any case, the parts are not even roughly equal to a four-act scheme (setup – 49 minutes, complicating action – 20 minutes, climax – 28 minutes, epilogue – 4 minutes). However, the divisions cannot be also seen as totally arbitrary – they correspond to the length of a narrative part of a particular mood. But the decision of how long such a part has to last is completely on the filmmaker and, as we have seen, Apichatpong doesn't follow a familiar path. The shot, the episode, the narrative part lasts as long as the director wants it to and certainly not for as long any film critics would expect or filmmaking manual would suggest.

The film ends with a halt – a shot of the sky. Nothing is in motion (for example, through the steady forward-movement of the characters by riding in a car or walking through the jungle). Although Orn suggests going home, this aim is not pursued in the film – the characters are just lying on the riverbank. A phrase often heard in reference to slow cinema can be applied: "nothing happens". At the end of *Blissfully Yours* nothing happens anymore, therefore the story has reached an end.

5.3. Degree of narrativity and tellability

As described above, most of the activities in the film which can be described as events (such as Min trying to get a health certificate, Orn mixing a cream, Orn having sex, Orn expressing the wish to have another child) actually have a comparatively high degree of tellability. However, they have no further implications in film's narrative development.

Interestingly, the film's narrative acquires more structure if we look at the episodes with the longest duration. The film's opening scene at the hospital that lasts for 14 minutes is the first to come to mind. Then there are the two car rides – Orn and Min driving to the factory where Roong works and then Roong and Min driving to the jungle. The episode with Orn at the wheel lasts for 7 minutes; the passage from the city to the jungle lasts for 11 minutes (including the opening titles). During the first car ride Orn applies cream to Min's hands. However, this is the only activity besides the journey itself that can be described as having any meaning in the episode. Although we heard in the scene at the hospital that Ming has skin problems, we cannot attest any narrativity to the scene in the car because it yields no further consequences. During the drive to the factory the viewer may notice Tommy driving a motorcycle and trying to catch Orn's attention, but, as is usual in slow cinema, this activity is so minuscule – the staging does not direct our attention to Tommy – that it may easily go unnoticed. Thus, what comes to prominence instead of the narrative potential of a particular activity is the unusually long duration of the sequence which, in narrative terms, delivers no new information. Obviously

the scenery the car goes through changes, but it does not affect the story. What we actually obtain are episodes built of several not very long shots[474] with almost the same narrative information that possess a low degree of tellabilty – respectively Orn and Min and Roong and Min in a car. Thus, the cause-and-effect chain (or, as described previously, the level of narrativity) constituted by the strength of the bonds between the narrative events is very loose and justified only with the fact that the events follow each other in a linear fashion.

The episodes in the jungle are a similar case – the young couple strolling through the forest (8 minutes), making-out (2 minutes), Orn having sex (8 minutes), Orn's walk through the jungle (4 minutes), etc.

For the time being it can be stated that long stretches of *Blissfully Yours* consist of accumulated activities that mostly have no causal impact on further narrative development. Thus, we can attest a low degree (or level) of narrativity to the plot.

However, there are several episodes in the film that are even more unusual. These are the three episodes that seem to be the inner voice of Min and are exemplified as drawings on the filmic image with an accompanied voice-over. These are the only moments in the film that present concrete information about Min. However, as they lack any time markers they still remain indefinable without any possibility of arranging them in a temporal order according to the plot. It seems that Min's last voice-over takes place some time in the future, but we receive no proof for that. The claim herein is that these episodes enrich the film's artistic design and functionally enlarge and encourage the viewer's imagination in developing Min's story beyond the scenes shown onscreen. They exhibit a high degree of tellability for the development which does however place most of the responsibility on the viewer. This study even suggests that how far the viewer wants to develop the story is completely left to his imagination and engagement – the filmmaker has set no limits for that. Thus, the concept of gap (Leerstelle) can be enriched with a very unusual example. As the film goes on, however, without any further lingering on Min's voice-over stories, the development of Min's story beyond the onscreen events will obviously be postponed to after the screening. Instead, the audience will follow the durational episodes with no new narrative information and try to find an acceptable approach of how to deal with these *mysterious objects*. The claim herein is that these very long episodes depicting events mostly possessing a low level of tellability arranged in a very loose narrative order (but containing impressive atmosphere) have two effects on the viewer: namely, they create certain moods and cause immersion into the image as an effect. Both the notions of *mood* and *atmosphere* are used interchangeably in cinema studies; however, *atmosphere* has always been treated as a property of the image. The following subchapter starts out by broaching the issue of atmosphere and then further turns to the moods-cue approach, which seems to be best suited for analyzing such an unusual film as *Blissfully Yours*. In doing so, however, this study, which until now was concerned with disclosing narrative structures in the

474 For more on the issue of shot lengths see chapter III. on statistical style analysis and parametricity.

films in question, turns away from pure detection of arrangements of events into narrative sequences and passes into the realm of hermeneutics. But the change in *modus operandi* is grounded in the findings explained above. Namely, the concept of the act scheme is only partly consistent with the structure of *Blissfully Yours*. The fact that mood and atmosphere not only support the story but develop into the main driving force for the film's structure demands a change of approach.

5.4. Atmosphere as the leading narrative principle

British film critic Jonathan Romney, who defined slow cinema in *Sight and Sound* magazine, highlighted atmosphere as one of its most important markers. [475] *Blissfully Yours* delivers an example where atmosphere not only plays an important role in the film, but even constitutes the structuring principle of the narrative. So, in the second part of the film, each new story turn corresponds with a change in tone. Watching this film corresponds to the train of thought described by German aesthetician Gernot Böhme, who addresses the issues of the aesthetics of the atmosphere. One can use his words in stating that:

> Man wird nicht durch das Bild als Zeichen auf dessen Bedeutung verwiesen (die man dann allenfalls denken könnte), sondern das Bild ist in gewisser Weise selbst, was es darstellt, d.h., das Dargestellte ist in und durch das Bild präsent. Natürlich kann man auch ein solches Bild lesen und deuten, aber das heißt die Erfahrung der Präsenz des Dargestellten, nämlich die Atmosphäre des Bildes, überspringen oder gar verleugnen.[476]

As exemplified above, the notion of atmosphere leads our train of thought more towards phenomenology. As this study is more interested in film perception from the vantage point of cognitive approach and pragmatics, it seems more appropriate to broach this issue using the mood-cue approach as developed by Greg M. Smith, and further amended by Carl Plantinga. The most interesting point regarding atmosphere in cinema is the question whether atmosphere is an inherent quality of the image itself, or does the viewer apply it to the shot. Smith and Plantinga offer particularly well-suited help in answering this question. What follows is an overview of the concepts of mood and of immersion as an effect of it, and the suggestion of how it can be applied to the analysis of *Blissfully Yours*.

5.5. The mood-cue approach

As demonstrated above, the main constructing principle of *Blissfully Yours* is based on atmosphere – almost all the episodes, and especially the most durational ones – have a particular prevalent emotional tone. The suggestion herein is that the concept of moods as developed by Greg M. Smith and further adopted by Carl Plantinga offers a plausible tool for approaching this issue.

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475 Jonathan Romney *In Search of Lost Time* in *Sight & Sound*, February 2010, p. 43.
476 Gernot Böhme *Atmosphäre. Essays zur neuen Ästhetik*, Frankfurt am Main, 1995, p. 24

The first task is to underline the main advantage of Smith's theory: his definition of mood is not necessarily linked to the onscreen character as is the case with most approaches that analyze the role of emotions in cinema[477]. Indeed, his approach also allows for ascribing the power of creating mood to music, elements of staging, colour, sound and lighting.[478] Thus, it's possible to allot style the role it deserves in evoking emotions in the viewer. As Smith rightly remarks, these standard approaches to emotion in films benefit a character's actions, motivations, and goals, because these functions are tightly linked to the function of emotions. Namely, in contrast to moods, emotions are usually thought of as being object-, action-, and goal-oriented.[479] A mood, as Smith holds:

> is a preparatory state in which one is seeking an opportunity to express a particular emotion or emotion set. Moods are expectancies that we are about to have a particular emotion, that we will encounter cues that will elicit particular emotions. (..) Moods act as the emotion system's equivalent of attention, focusing us on certain stimuli and not others.[480]

If emotions are brief states, then moods are more long-lasting and more diffuse.[481]
These two definitions are the bone of contention here. As Plantinga rightly argues, Smith's definition of emotions and mood are actually very fuzzy, because there are moods that are short-lasting or of low intensity, and there are emotions which cannot be described as brief and intense.[482] This study concurs with Plantinga stating that a combination of moods, emotions and/or physiological states can serve as "orienting emotional states". Secondly, an emotion can also generate a mood.[483] The prime assignment herein however isn't to finally solve this controversy regarding a proper definition of emotion and mood. For heuristic reasons this study will use a simplified notion of emotion as a short, but goal-oriented state and regard mood as longer lasting and hazier.
The point regarded as more important for the further analysis of *Blissfully Yours* is the distinction Plantinga makes between art moods and human moods. The first notion, as Plantinga acknowledges, is actually a metaphor – strictly speaking, films cannot have moods. Thus art moods are not affects themselves, they merely serve as elicitors of human moods (although not always).[484] In comparison, a human mood is "a discrete mental and bodily state."[485]
Even more interesting and important for the purposes herein is the passage in Plantinga's

477 For example, Noël Carroll *The Philosophy of Horror, or Paradoxes of the Heart,* New York, 1990; Ed Tan *Emotion and the Structure of Narrative Film: Film as an Emotion Machine*, Mahwah, 1996; Torben Kragh Grodal *Moving Pictures: A New Theory of Film Genres, Feelings, and Cognitions*, Oxford, 1999.
478 Greg M. Smith *Local Emotions, Global Moods, and Film Structure* in Carl Plantinga, Greg M. Smith (eds.) *Passionate Views: Film, Cognition, and Emotion*, Baltimore, 1999, p. 126.
479 Ibid., p. 105-106.
480 Ibid., p.113.
481 Ibid., p. 112-113.
482 Carl Plantinga *Art Moods and Human Moods in Narrative Cinema* in *New Literary History*, Vol. 43, Nr. 3, Summer 2012, p. 459.
483 Ibid., p. 459.
484 Ibid., p. 461.
485 Ibid., p. 461.

article concerning the evocation of human moods. He names at least three factors responsible for that. These are: emotions, through form and content associated with particular moods and "cognitive styles" associated with particular moods.[486]

It seems that Plantinga's efforts in trying to find a clear-cut solution in regards to what generates mood, is an attempt to solve a chicken-and-egg-situation. Namely, even before the story begins – which has to be understood cognitively and, consequently, yields emotions and/ or moods – what is onscreen are different forms, colours and sounds that already evoke some kind of an art mood. We can tentatively guess that from the point when the story sets in human moods and emotions will be induced. Thus, we once again have to pay more attention to "affectively charged 'qualities' through form and content" as Plantinga calls them.

However, *Blissfully Yours* contains one very significant scene wherein the interplay between the art mood and the emotions invested by the viewer is more complicated. It's the episode with the three characters swimming in the river. It is a bright, sunny afternoon on a picturesque river bank. The setting alone could induce only a positive mood in the audience. At the beginning of the episode Roong encourages Orn to come into the water, but she hesitates. However, Roong's statement that she is not going to kidnap her actually fits with a phrase she expressed a few minutes earlier that 'Roong would be happier if Orn disappeared'. Thus these two verbal utterances, although expressed in a pastoral atmosphere, may raise suspicions in the viewer of whether Roong may be acting in bad faith. Orn's hesitation only reinforces this doubt. Even more so, Min calls out to Roong as if wanting to say something or trying to prevent a catastrophe. In the due course of the scene, as Roong takes Orn by hand deeper and deeper into the river, the girl encourages Orn not to be so tense – that there is nothing to be afraid of. Even to a film viewer with little comprehensive cinema viewing experience, these sentences and actions may serve as a warning that something bad is going to happen.

All of a sudden, as Roong starts diving, laughing and splashing water, the atmosphere of the scene changes into the careless joy that swim in a could river on a hot summer afternoon can bring about.

The menacing atmosphere at the beginning of the episode is not caused by the setting – it can only be concluded by taking into consideration previous developments. When the tone changes the interplay of the formal system and the plot creates a joyful mood that the viewer can share. Obviously, the concept of gap (Leerstelle) is able to acquire an additional facet here – if the precise emotional content of the scene is not given, we may have to bring it into the image. However, cases where the proper mood of an episode can be established only through contextual considerations are actually quite rare in cinema. It is usually the other way around – the image alone with colours, forms, movements and aural effects, and music if present, already serves as a source for a particular mood.

The river episode is quite unusual for another reason as well. Namely, in comparison to other

486 Carl Plantinga *Art Moods and Human Moods in Narrative Cinema* in *New Literary History*, Vol. 43, Nr. 3, Summer 2012, p. 464.

episodes taking place in the jungle, the most significant element for defining the scene's mood belongs to the realm of plot. For other scenes – the walks through the jungle, sleeping on the riverbank, etc. – Smith's following observation is decisive:

> (..) we cannot reduce a film to its most narratively significant elements (actions hindering or furthering a character's goal achievement). (..) We should therefore be able to find highly coordinated bursts of emotion cues that have little or no effect on the overt diegetic aim (achievement of a goal).[487]

Smith labels such "bursts of emotion" as emotion markers which have no other aim than to elicit brief moments of emotion. It has no effect on narrative development whatsoever.[488] However, according to Smith's definition of emotions and mood, these markers function as a reward for the viewer engaged in an appropriate mood.[489]

What is highly interesting in his approach is the stance that films can be of more or less densely emotional information. Whereas a film with dense emotional information is designed to elicit emotions with great frequency and specificity, a film with sparse informative emotional narration provides fewer redundant cues.[490] Smith convincingly demonstrates that a film such as *Raiders of the Lost Ark* (1981) which has a very strong goal-orientation expresses great density, but *Local Hero* (1983), an example of varying degrees of goal-orientation, is also a less densely emotional informative film.[491] A link exists between the goal-orientation of the characters and a film's emotional informativeness, as Smith calls it. *Blissfully Yours* is an example of that, and if we take the duration of the episode into account, the situation may be even more complicated. As suggested above, though the characters' goals remain unclear, *Blissfully Yours* can still be considered as a film structured around moods. The difference between emotions and mood has to be stressed yet again, particularly in regards to duration. Emotions are brief states, but moods are long-lasting and diffuse. What we are dealing with in *Blissfully Yours* is actually moods with no clear-cut emotions as understood by Smith (with an exception of the short burst of emotion of anger about Orn in the river episode). Additionally, the moods in this film do not function as a preparatory state for any emotion whatsoever. Thus, in the case of *Blissfully Yours* we cannot speak of emotional markers as creators of brief emotions – there is no such thing in this film. There are various lengthy episodes without goal-orientation, only with a reigning mood. Thus, according to Smith's definitions, what we have in front of us is a film with a low level of informative emotional text. One of the reasons for this is the fact that this film as an art film creates no generic expectations in the viewer. Smith's account has also anticipated such a case:

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487 Greg M. Smith *Local Emotions, Global Moods, and Film Structure* in. Carl Plantinga, Greg M. Smith (eds.) *Passionate Views: Film, Cognition, and Emotion*, Baltimore, 1999, p. 117.
488 Greg M. Smith *Film Structure and the Emotion System*, Cambridge, 2003, p. 44-45.
489 Ibid., p. 45.
490 Greg M. Smith *Local Emotions, Global Moods, and Film Structure* in Carl Plantinga, Greg M. Smith (eds.) *Passionate Views: Film, Cognition, and Emotion*, Baltimore, 1999, p. 120.
491 Ibid., p. 121.

> The mood-cue approach would suggest that if a film does not take advantage of emotion prototypes associated with genre or goals, it must rely on non-prototypically organized emotion cuing. One solution might be to arrange a rapid series of smaller cues that sustain the mood. By shifting to a faster pace of cutting, the film may provide reinforcement for the mood orientation, even if there are few goal or genre expectations to guide our anticipation.[492]

One might think *Blissfully Yours* is the perfect answer to Smith's suggestion. Consider, for example, the episodes in the car (Orn and Min driving to Roong's workplace; Roong and Min driving to the jungle), or the walks in the forest. These episodes are built on short cuts, however, as the episode goes on and the same activity is being pursued in the next shot and in the next and so on, the viewer receives the impression that the whole episode has been filmed in just one take.[493] Thus, although we encounter a kind of a jump cut here, it does not arouse or disturb the viewer in the way a classical jump cut á la Godard would do. It may even remain unnoticed. But thus the prevailing mood of the episode is sustained.

At this stage, the extended length of the durational episodes mentioned above should be stressed, because, as Susan L. Feagin observed, the shot's duration may have cognitive and affective results on the audience.[494] In explaining her point of view by using the film *Stranger than Paradise* (1984) by Jim Jarmusch, she arrives at the conclusion that this study also regards as highly relevant for assessing possible responses to slow cinema:

> It is also plausible to think that durational factors can influence affective responses directly, without producing cognitive intermediaries. Thus, one can link timing with the production of feelings and moods such as melancholy, tension and relaxation, joyfulness or well-being, anxiety or boredom, which do not require a cognitive source or component for being the psychological state they are.[495]

In most slow cinema examples we talk of very extensive long takes, but the approach to the jump cut as exemplified in *Blissfully Yours* reaches a similar effect as the example of the long takes in *Goodbye, Dragon Inn*.

Feagin's position helps to enlarge the possible scope of reactions to a film – they may be not only cognitive, and the duration of the image (or episode with minor changes) is of consequence here.

Of most interest is the effect that durational shots/episodes with a low density of emotional information have on the viewer. From the point of view of methodology this poses an impregnable problem – although the film's design and narrative approach can be described, the audience's reactions in slow cinema cases are harder to trace. Jens Eder was quoted

492 Greg M. Smith *Film Structure and the Emotion System*, Cambridge, 2003, p. 55-56.
493 More on this issue see the chapter about statistical style analysis.
494 Susan L. Feagin *Time and Timing* in Carl Plantinga, Greg M. Smith (eds.) *Passionate Views: Film, Cognition, and Emotion*, Baltimore, 1999, p. 169.
495 Ibid., p. 177.

stating that mostly the linking between the filmic structures and the affective reactions they produce will be, amongst others, of loose and probabilistic matter. Feagin seems to follow a similar line of argument by stating that "Our psychological vocabulary for identifying and individuating affective responses that are not emotions is, unfortunately, woefully inadequate and unsystematic."[496] Thus the contention in regards to what effects the atmosphere-laden episodes in *Blissfully Yours* create. So far we have learned that both emotions and moods are present in *Blissfully Yours*. As Plantinga concludes, "qualities" of form can yield automatic bodily responses, whereas emotions are accompanied by various bodily effects.[497] Relying on personal experience, we can express the contention that one of the bodily affects possible during the film viewing is immersion into the image. A reference to immersion might seem like a far-fetched hypothesis, but only if we associate immersion with solely 3D, VR or 360° cinema, or computer-games. As will be shown below, immersion is a very expandable concept which can and has to be adapted to the needs of slow cinema.

However, a researcher investigating a linkage between the duration, atmosphere/mood and immersion, would face another difficulty. Namely, as Greg M. Smith so poetically put it, "Films do not "make" people feel. (..) Films offer invitations to feel."[498] Thus, the film cannot force you to do something – to feel in a particular way – it can only offer the possibility. Also, in the case of immersion into a slow film, it is only a suggestion.

The next subchapter starts with an overview of the traditional understanding of immersion, but ends with the development of a new approach suited for this case example.

5.6. Types of immersion

In cinema studies this concept has been at the centre of interest for only some fifteen years – prior to that the notion of immersion was used as a granted category. Renewed interest in immersion is connected to the raise of virtual reality (VR) and games' studies.

The first major problem is the definition of what immersion is. Marie-Laure Ryan explains that immersion seems to be a self-explanatory concept, it just takes place[499] and precisely this anticipates the problem. Others writing about immersion are confronted with this problem as well. Immersion is a hazy concept – therefore there are several definitions possible.

Marie-Laure Ryan, in writing about immersion in literature, explains this phenomenon in the following way:

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496 Susan L. Feagin *Time and Timing* in Carl Plantinga, Greg M. Smith (eds.) *Passionate Views: Film, Cognition, and Emotion*, Baltimore, 1999, p. 177.
497 Carl Plantinga *Art Moods and Human Moods in Narrative Cinema* in *New Literary History*, Vol. 43, Nr. 3, Summer 2012, p. 466.
498 Greg M. Smith *Film Structure and the Emotion System*, Cambridge, 2003, p.12.
499 Ryan, Marie-Laure *Narrative as Virtual Reality: Immersion and Interactivity in Literature and Electronic Media*, Baltimore, 2003 p. 11.

> For a text to be immersive, […] it must create a space to which the reader, spectator, or user can relate, and it must populate this space with individuated objects. It must, in other worlds, construct the setting for a potential narrative action, even through it may lack the temporal extension to develop this action into a plot. This fundamentally *mimetic* concept of immersion remains faithful to the VR experience [...].[500]

Although Ryan mentions the spectator in order to make her definition suited for immersion in visual culture, we cannot take this concept for granted because there is an onthological difference between literature and all visual information including cinema or VR.

German art historian Oliver Grau summarizes his position on immersion in a way better suited for visual information:

> Im virtuellen Raum – historisch wie aktuell – wirkt die Illusion auf zwei Ebenen: Ihre klassische Funktion, die spielerisch-bewusste Hingabe an den Schein – der ästhetische Genuss der Illusion – kann durch eine Intensivierung bildlicher Wirkungsmittel gesteigert werden und zu einer Überwältigung der Realitätswahrnehmung führen. Dazu gehört neben Mitteln des Illusionismus insbesondere das den Gesichtswinkel möglichst vollständig ausfüllende Bildformat und die Ansprache möglichst vieler anderer Sinne. Die hierdurch mögliche Suggestion, die den Betrachter gewissermaßen in den Bildraum eintauchen lässt, vermag die Subjekt-Objekt-Beziehung für einen gewissen Zeitraum aus den Angeln zu heben und dem `Als-Ob` im Bewusstsein Konsequenz zu verschaffen. Diese sinnliche und rezeptive Verbindung zum Bild soll hier als `Immersion` bezeichnet werden.[501]

Grau is speaking of a much stronger modus of immersion than Ryan for literature. The comparison between these two definitions suggests that there are different grades of immersion, each suited to every mode of art – either literal or visual. But in the realm of visual arts we should also distinguish between immersion in VR, immersion in classical Hollywood films, and in films containing slow narration. What brings all these different definitions of immersion to a common denominator is the requirement for immersive artwork to create the feeling of being somewhere else, a place apart from the world, and this mode of spectatorship should foster bodily participation in the viewer during the reception process of the art work.[502]

Obviously, we need a deffinition of immersion which takes into account different circumstances in which this phenomenon can occur.

Marie- Laure Ryan approaches this discussion in a more refined fashion, as she distinguishes between three modes of immersion:

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500 Ryan, Marie-Laure *Narrative as Virtual Reality: Immersion and Interactivity in Literature and Electronic Media*, Baltimore, 2003, p. 14-15.
501 Oliver Grau *Virtuelle Kunst in Geschichte und in Gegenwart,* Raimer, 2001, p. 23-24
502 Alison Griffiths *Shivers down Your Spine. Cinema, Museums, and the Immersive View*, New York, Chichester, West Sussex, 2008, p. 2

> [...] three forms of involvement with narratives: spatial immersion, the response to setting; temporal immersion, the response to plot; and emotional immersion, the response to character.[503]

Such differentiation is highly productive if applied to slow cinema, because it not only fosters our understanding of immersion, but also points to different forms of immersion. Following Ryan's definition that spatial immersion represents a response to setting, the ghost rides in *Blissfully Yours* deserve special attention prior to moving on to the issue of haptic cinema as another form of involvement with setting.

The second subchapter ponders the issue of emotional immersion. As pointed out earlier, proper emotional bonds cannot be established with characters in slow cinema as they are often fragmented with no discernible motivation for their deeds. Thus, the definition of emotional immersion for the slow film cinematic experience has to be restated.

Temporal immersion, as Ryan underlines, calls into question the topic of suspense which, as with many traditional notions, has to be redefined if applied to slow cinema, and this will be done in due course in the closing subchapter.

5.7. a) Spatial immersion

Unlike in literature, where the imaginative setting has to be constructed by the skilful language of the writer and by the imagination of the reader, the visual information is already present in a picture or a cinematic shot. In film, spatial immersion is obvious. However, this study wants to point out a special case – the phantom rides – that draw the viewer even more into the setting. In *Blissfully Yours* we encounter two such episodes (two journeys in a car with the camera positioned behind the car during long stretches). (Interestingly, Taiwanese filmmaker Hou Hsiou-Hsien, who can be regarded as a forerunner of the slow cinema movement of the 21st century[504], has made such phantom rides his trademark.)

In contemporary cinema the main function of phantom rides is to create somatic effects in the audience. Research has shown that cognition is especially sensitive to the kinetics of cinematic images.[505] But such takes can also be put into the context of cinema history, where they belong to phantom-rides which were very popular during the early years of cinema. Such takes give the audience the feeling that they are immersed in this other reality.[506] Tom Gunning, in his

503 Ryan, Marie-Laure *Narrative as Virtual Reality: Immersion and Interactivity in Literature and Electronic Media*, Baltimore, 2003 p. 121.
504 Close analysis of the aesthetic strategies employed by Hou Hsiou Hsien can be found in David Bordwell *Figures Traced in Light: On Cinematic Staging*, Berkeley, 2005 and Charles R. Warner *Smoke Gets in Your Eyes: Hou Hsiou Hsien´s Optics of Ephemerality* in *Senses of Cinema*, Issue 39, 2006, available at http://sensesofcinema.com/2006/spotlight-on-hou-hsiao-hsien/hou_optics_ephemerality/ (accessed 10.07.2014).
505 Robin Curtis *Immersion und Einfühlung: Zwischen Repräsentationalität und Materialität bewegter Bilder* in *montage av* 17/2/2008 , p. 98.
506 Erkki Huhtamo *Unterwegs in der Kapsel: Simulatoren und das Bedürfnis nach totaler Immersion* in *montage av* 17/2/2008, p. 53.

authoritative conception of the cinema of attractions, relates these phantom rides to the attractions that shocked the audience during the early years of cinema.[507] But in silent cinema, as opposed to contemporary cinema, such shots were very short; they lasted for a minute at most. To analyse audiences' reactions one has to take into account the duration of such shots, where "nothing happens." Then, beyond the effects, we could also talk about the mistakes of the filmmakers. If such scenes last for a very long time then our thoughts may not only form an alternative narrative, but we may also feel tortured in our seats and leave before the film ends. However, in *Blissfully Yours* these phantom rides are the most involving shots of the whole film. If lengthier episode as the blow-job (apart from the voyeuristic pleasures it creates), which is filmed in a long, static shot, may prompt boredom in the viewer, then shots with steadily changing scenery that offer more and more new views invite the audience to be immerse in them.

However, spatial immersion also offers another path of how to try to ascribe relevance to such cinematic experiences. Namely, our engagement with the surface of the image is a reminder of the concept of haptic cinema as developed by Laura Marks. She traces the term 'haptic' back to Aloïs Riegel and Wilhelm Wörringer, who used it at the beginning of the 20th century. The term emerges again in Deleuze and Guattaris' *A Thousand Plateaus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia* in connection to the notion of 'smooth space' – "a space that must be moved through by constant reference to the immediate environment, as when navigating an expanse of snow or sand."[508]

Applying the term to film, Marks defines haptic cinema in its strict sense as follows:

> Haptic invites a look that moves on the surface plane of the screen for some time before the viewer realizes what she or he is beholding. Such images resolve into figuration only gradually, if at all.[509]

Marks coins such images with the notion of skin – because such undefined images offer no cues as to what or whom we are looking at – we experience only the surface, i.e., the skin of the film.[510]

She goes on explaining that:

> Haptic perception privileges the material presence of the image. Drawing from other forms of sense experience, primarily touch and kinaesthetic, haptic visuality involves the body more than is the case with optical visuality. Touch is a sense located on the surface of the body: thinking of cinema as haptic is only one step toward considering the ways cinema appeals to the body as a whole.[511]

507 Ibid., p. 54.
508 Laura Marks *Touch: Sensuous Theory and Multisensory Media*, Minneapolis, 2002, p. XII.
509 Laura Marks *The Skin of the Film: Intercultural Cinema, Embodiment, and the Senses, Durham, 1999, p. 162 – 163.*
510 Jennifer M. Barker *The Tactile Eye. Touch and the Cinematic Experience*, Berkeley, 2009.
511 Laura Marks *The Skin of the Film: Intercultural Cinema, Embodiment, and the Senses, Durham, 1999, p. 162 – 162.*

Other effects that enable haptic images are cinematic techniques such as optical printing, solarization, and scratching the emulsion, changes in focus, graininess and the effects of under- and overexposure.[512] However, these effects are not under consideration in Marks concept.

In this study's opinion, the critical weakness of her concept of haptic cinema is that she sees haptic qualities only in blurred, unclear images. We as spectators are bodily impressed not only by such images, but also through other cinematic techniques, so the notion of haptic cinema should be expanded. To my mind, one can find haptic qualities not only in clear cinematic images (optical visuality, as per Marks), which puts the emphasis on the visual splendour – although there can be different degree of visual splendour –, but also in images that capture sun-filled, green treetops in the jungle or slowly flowing river water as it is in Blissfully Yours. The decisive factor here of whether the haptic qualities of the shot are fore-grounded or the narrative development takes an overhand, lies in the duration of the image. As Greg M. Smith in another context remarked, the temporal unfolding of the filmic stimulus is crucial to the way it appeals to the system as a whole.[513] I would propose to consider that in case of slow films the mode of the film is constantly changing between different degrees of narrativity and different degrees of narrative. A crucial role here plays the duration of the shot - in extremely lenghy takes where "nothing happens" haptic qualities of the image itself take overhand.

German film theoreticians Gertrud Koch and Christiane Voss who have written about the materiality of the filmic image acknowledge that:

> … beginnt sich in der neueren Filmtheorie eine Tendenz dahingehend abzuzeichnen, so etwas wie die Eigenästhetik der auch kinetisch-taktilen Materialität von Film hervorzuheben, die jenseits seines mimetischen Vermögens liegt. Weder Korrespondenz noch Referenz zählen für das, was Film in seiner Erfahrbarkeit auszeichnet. Vielmehr wird Kino zunehmend als eine virtuelle Wirklichkeit eigenen Rechts betrachtet, die unsere sinnlichen Reaktionen weder suspendiert noch manipuliert, sondern ins eigene Recht setzt.[514]

This idea about the specific materiality of the filmic image, which suspends its mimetic qualities, means a further development stage of the concept of haptic cinema. Because now we speak not only of blurred images, but also of the materiality of all filmic images. And the haptic qualities of the image have to be seen within the framework of the so called 'turn to the body' that has ruled since the mid-1990s. However, it also has consequences for the methodology of cinematic research.

Vivian Sobchack, who in her groundbreaking book *The Address of the Eye* incorporated the bodily experience back into the field of film studies, insists on describing the cinematic experience, using autobiographical and/or anecdotal experience, because "grounding broader

512 Ibid., *p.* 172-173.
513 Greg M. Smith *Film Structure and the Emotion System*, Cambridge, 2003, p. 11.
514 Gertrud Koch, Christiane Voss ... *Kraft der Illusion* in Gertrud Koch, Christiane Voss (eds.) ... *Kraft der Illusion*, Munich, 2006, p. 9.

social claims in autobiographical and anecdotal experience is not merely a fuzzy and subjective substitute for rigorous and objective analysis but purposefully provides the phenomenological – and embodied – premises for a more processual, expansive, and resonant materialist logic through which we, as subjects, can understand (and perhaps guide) what passes as our objective historical and cultural existence."[515] Describing this method as "thick description"[516], she turns against the more traditional use of metaphors as the usual tool in describing the bodily experience of cinema.

The second most prominent author dealing with bodily reactions in cinema, Laura Marks, addresses the question of methodology. In her first book on the subject *The Skin of the Film: Intercultural Cinema, Embodiment, and the Senses* (1999), where she defined the term "haptic cinema", she explained it in a language and style common to academia, but she changed her writing style for her second book *Touch: Sensuous Theory and Multisensory Media* (2002). The reason was, as she states, the problem of translation of audiovisual experiences into words.[517] In order to give a proper impression of the art work, the critic has to change not only his method, but also his attitude, she says. Turning away from the distanced position of a cool-headed critic, Marks makes use of haptic criticism, which tries to preserve "a trace of the wetness of the encounter."[518]

The novel approach to film scholarship by using video essay as a tool of film analysis can be regarded as a long-awaited liberation of cinema studies. - It is much easier to talk about moving images using the film format. But to my mind, the question still remains whether all the theoretical considerations about a certain topic can be translated into images of an audio-visual essay.

5.6. b) Emotional immersion

In the above quotation, Ryan linked the emotional immersion to the character. As pointed to in the subchapter about moods in cinema, traditionally (in the cinema studies) the viewer's emotional involvement with the story is built on character development throughout the film. However, as underlined above, this stance poses a problem for slow cinema where characters lack the typical constitution so characteristic to mainstream protagonists (clear goals, motivation for deeds, etc.). Following this train of thought it becomes obvious that in the case of immersion we cannot define the emotional involvement the viewer is exposed to only with the help of the characters. Therefore, the survey herein introduced the moods-cue approach. To sum it up, this stance allows for incorporating all of the different aspects of an art work into the spectator's experience that are not directly connected to a character's actions, but that can

515 Vivian Sobchack *Carnal Thoughts: Embodiment and Moving Image Culture*, Berkeley, 2004, p. 6.
516 Ibid., p. 5.
517 Laura Marks *Touch: Sensuous Theory and Multisensory Media*, Minneapolis, 2002, p. IX.
518 Ibid., p. X.

contribute considerably to our spectatorial experience. A similar move towards the inclusion of the qualities which surpass the traditional character-audience relationship has been made by German film scholar Robin Curtis in defining immersion into film. She criticizes the traditional view on immersion, so common in media studies, that an inevitable requirement for this faculty are appropriate technical means creating a 360-degree illusion, for example.[519] Curtis encourages leaving this apparatus-centred approach behind and suggests regarding immersion as instead an effect generated by two equal forces. The first is our ability to combine different sensory modalities of perception during the encounter with an art work. The second force is our ability for empathy (Einfühlung).[520] Such a definition of immersion leads to a completely new understanding of this phenomenon. Curtis' explication of the consequences is well worth quoting here at length:

> In diesem Sinne ist die Immersion eben nicht ausschließlich als Effekt der spezifischen Eigenschaften der Wahrnehmung oder lediglich als Wahrnehmungstäuschung zu fassen. Vielmehr ist Immersion als ästhetischer Effekt zu beschrieben, der gerade durch die Verlebendigungsimpulse der Einfühlung zu vielfältigen Möglichkeiten der Involvierung Anlass gibt – und das auch jenseits einer naturalistischen Abbildstrategie. Es liegt sogar nahe zu denken, dass Immersion und Einfühlung so sinnverwandt sind, dass sie als synonym betrachtet werden können.[521]

A necessary point for reference for equating immersion with empathy for Curtis is German philosopher Theodor Lipps (1851 – 1914), whom different authors in cinema studies traditionally quote in order to explain the empathy which the audience feels toward a film's protagonists. However, Curtis points to the nuance that Lipps' understanding of empathy is much broader. Namely, he suggests that inanimate objects such as colours, different forms, moods and spaces can invoke empathy. Lipps defines this state as an experience of vitality of the self, which is an inherent feature of every object of the world.[522] Thus, Curtis concludes, during empathy we are not preoccupied with the objective qualities of the world, "vielmehr ist man mit den Charakteristiken des eigenen leiblichen Engagements mit den Objekten beschäftigt, kurz: mit den Sensationen, Aktivitäten und Stimmungen, die durch diese Beschäftigung entstehen."[523]

This statement induces a return to the issue of arresting image, which was introduced in the chapter about *Goodbye, Dragon Inn*. An arresting image is a shot which executes intense sensual effect on the viewer and is divorced from its narrative function. There this concept was redefined by applying it to images which display intense perceptual moments, and thus go beyond the usual invitation to interpretation as the nonplusultra solution for dealing with

519 Robin Curtis *Immersion und Einfühlung: Zwischen Repräsentationalität und Materialität bewegter Bilder* in *montage av* 17/2/2008 , p. 92.
520 Ibid., p. 97.
521 Robin Curtis *Immersion und Einfühlung: Zwischen Repräsentationalität und Materialität bewegter Bilder* in *montage av* 17/2/2008 , p. 97.
522 Ibid., p. 99.
523 Ibid., p. 100.

any image. At this point we can go a step further by claiming that the experience involved in dealing with arresting images can be called immersion. Different shots in *Blissfully Yours* possess such an intense power that we can ascribe to them qualities of arresting images, thus leading the viewer to engage with emotions, moods and other affective reactions, and call this process immersion.

5.7. c) Temporal immersion

Ryan allies the term temporal immersion with the term suspense – the reader's wish to know the ending of the story at the end of narrative time.[524] Suspense is another contested issue in connection to slow cinema, but a denial of suspense in connection to this cinematic movement can arise only if we work with the traditional definition. It comes as no surprise that the notion of suspense is usually coined with action-laden (popular) genres. As the editors of the canonical work on this issue – *Suspense: Conceptualizations, Theoretical Analysis, and Empirical Explorations* – rightly remark in the preface of the book, this topic can be approached from two different perspectives. Either we analyse the narrative design of the artwork taking into account the uncertainty of the narrative outcome – the danger for the protagonist and the play of the time delay – or we concentrate on the cognitive activities of the viewers, their expectations and emotions.[525] Surely, both aspects are important in order to fully grasp this phenomenon. However, after analysing several slow cinema films, this study dares to claim that in this type of art film suspense is generated more through the cognitive play of the viewer; less decisive are the requirements for suspense already built into the narrative text. For example, the sheer linearity of the narratives in these films already per definition eschews the possibility of time plays or at least diminishes their importance. Slow narration films often show "a sense of blind progress"[526], that, according to Ryan, is the biggest enemy of suspense.

Another point that has to be made concerns the range of possibilities about the possible developments and outcome of the narratives in the films in question. As Heta Pyrhönen has stated very concisely: "The intensity of suspense is inversely proportional to the range of possibilities."[527] However, the plot structures of slow films lack the intensity of suspense, which can be created by delimiting the range of possibilities for the characters. The variety of coices is closely tied to the events experienced by the character of the film, the desires and plans they have and the goals they pursue, and it enables the audience's ability to envision possible

524 Ryan, Marie-Laure *Narrative as Virtual Reality: Immersion and Interactivity in Literature and Electronic Media*, Baltimore, 2003 p. 140.
525 Peter Vorderer, Hans Jürgen Wulff, Mike Friedrichsen (eds.) *Suspense: Conceptualizations, Theoretical Analysis, and Empirical Explorations*, Mahwah, 1996, p. VII.
526 Ryan, Marie-Laure *Narrative as Virtual Reality: Immersion and Interactivity in Literature and Electronic Media*, Baltimore, 2003 p. 145.
527 Heta Pyrhönen *Suspense and Surprise* in David Herman, Manfred Jahn, and Marie-Laure Ryan (eds.) *Routledge Encyclopedia of Narrative Theory*, 2005, p. 578.

story developments.[528] As was stressed again and again, in the slow cinema examples herein the characters' goals mostly remain unclear, or they seem to drop the plans they had initially. Thus, we cannot link the suspense in slow cinema directly to the goals of the characters. For the definition of suspense in this type of film the expectations of the viewer can be reduced to a simple question "What happens next?" *Blissfully Yours* is a particularly good example. As exemplified above, the problems with which the story begins (Min needs a health certificate and has a terrible skin rash; Orn mixes a mysterious skin cream, etc.) are abandoned at some point. However, we remain interested in what happens next because the characters almost constantly move forwards (journeys in cars, walks through the jungle), which cause us to anticipate that through this constant change of scenery and activities SOMETHING will inevitably happen. András Bálin Kovács even makes a claim that the dramaturgical key that makes slow narratives acceptable is suspense. For his understanding of suspense, it is of no importance how slowly the plot develops or the insignificance of onscreen events. The anticipation created in the audience that something important is going to happen is crucial, and for that he makes the durational shots with slow camera motion accountable.[529]

David Bordwell has picked up this topic in a blog entry about art-house suspense. His central point is that suspense is a fundamental resource of all storytelling. However, if suspense is downplayed in a film such as in various art-house films, we often receive "the sheer successiveness of things".[530] In cases of sheer consecutiveness of events the task of the filmmaker becomes to stage the story in such a way that it can still arouse interest in the audience. The possibilities at hand could be careful framing, evocative sound and crisp narrative technique. Interestingly enough, German film psychologist Peter Wuss, in writing about suspense in the films of Michelangelo Antonioni (who can be regarded as one of the forerunners of slow cinema), points to the fact that where we encounter "only" tension instead of suspense, this abduction results in "something else", and in this case more emphasis is put on the analytical dimension in the perception process.[531] Furthermore, Wuss proposed that suspense, as he understands it, is always linked to emotions, but with tension this is not the case.[532] Wuss delineates the border between suspense and tension by the amount of information the protagonists have about the situation. Namely, the conditions for tension are the anticipation of relevant (often menacing) events, and the principal characters' ability to prevent a negative outcome of the events. However, in order for tension to achieve a quality of suspense, the viewer has to have

528 Heta Pyrhönen *Suspense and Surprise* in David Herman, Manfred Jahn, and Marie-Laure Ryan (eds.) *Routledge Encyclopedia of Narrative Theory*, 2005, p. 578.
529 András Bálint Kovács *The Cinema of Béla Tarr: the Circle closes*, London, 2013, p. 115-116.
530 David Bordwell *Arthouse suspense, in big and small doses* in Davird Bordwell *Observations on film art*, April 11, 2011: http://www.davidbordwell.net/blog/2011/04/11/arthouse-suspense-in-big-and-small-doses/ (Accessed 23.04.2014).
531 Peter Wuss *Narrative Tension in Antonioni* in Peter Vorderer, Hans Jürgen Wulff, Mike Friedrichsen (eds.) *Suspense: Conceptualizations, Theoretical Analysis, and Empirical Explorations*, Mahwah, 1996, p. 63.
532 Peter Wuss *Narrative Tension in Antonioni* in Peter Vorderer, Hans Jürgen Wulff, Mike Friedrichsen (eds.) *Suspense: Conceptualizations, Theoretical Analysis, and Empirical Explorations,* Mahwah, 1996, p. 53.

more information about the situation (a bomb being placed under a table, for example) than the protagonist does.[533]

Returning to *Blissfully Yours* as a case example with this definition of suspense in mind, this study asserts (with no surprise) that in slow cinema we encounter none of the three conditions demanded by Wuss. Neither for tension, nor for suspense. As aforementioned, we are left solely with our interest in what happens next. Thus, perhaps interest would be the proper definition for suspense in slow cinema.

Finally, turning to another category of suspense which Ryan brings into play – metasuspense. It is the critical involvement with a story (or, in this case, film). In this type of suspense the spectator focuses his attention not on the plot itself but on how the author/filmmaker is going to blend all the strands of the story together.[534] As the main audience of slow cinema is a cinema-educated one, the supposition is that metasuspense plays a very important role in the reception of these films. However, we cannot speak only of story in terms of these films, but the whole artistic design of the film acquires an exceptionally huge importance for the viewer. Bordwell addresses this topic in a more refined manner, stating that what comes instead of suspense on a large scale is suspense on micro-levels – across particular scenes or even on the level of a single shot. The already much-mentioned swimming episode in *Blissfully Yours* is an example of suspense on an episode level. But, the shot in *The Turin Horse* where the carriage with Ohlsdorfer and his daughter reappears in the shot some minutes after it had disappeared behind the horizon, acquires suspense precisely because of the tension, and consequently the expectations an empty durational shot can evoke in an experienced viewer. In all these cases, regardless of scale, the most important question for the viewer of slow cinema is: "What comes next?"

Here we arrive at a more general and important aspect of suspense. Namely, the question of whether the activities slow cinema viewers are engaged in can be better labelled as passive or engaged or both. This new turn in this analysis of slow cinema is preceded by a discussion in literature studies about the nature of hypertexts. As Yellowlees Douglas, the acknowledged researcher on hypertext maintains in an article (published together with colleague Andrew Hargadon):

> According to most critics, the pleasures of interacting with narratives, like the reading audiences who consume them, are monolithic entities. Texts are either immersive or engaging. Thrillers, westerns, and mysteries immerse us in their characters and plots, making us temporarily oblivious of the world around us. Texts by "difficult" writers engage us by challenging and subverting our schemas, reminding us of our role as

533 Ibid., p. 52.
534 Ryan, Marie-Laure *Narrative as Virtual Reality: Immersion and Interactivity in Literature and Electronic Media,* Baltimore, 2003 p. 145.

readers and sensemakers.[535]

In cinema studies we also distinguish between high and low culture, understanding mainstream Hollywood cinema as belonging to the lower level and slow films belonging to the far end of the upper level (and "difficult") genre, it seems justified to ponder this issue a little bit more.

Ryan, in her book on immersion, also acknowledges that metasuspense actually does not belong to suspense, but anticipates interactivity.[536] Yet, as Douglas and Hargadon, relying on the schema theory, point out, our immersion into a story is more easily enabled by the genre fiction than by difficult texts, but the engagement with a text is founded in our ability to recognize the unique or unpredictable elements and distinguish unusual elements in the mise-en-scène.[537] Both authors acknowledge that highly immersive texts can involve engagement and vice versa. They offer flow-theory, as developed by the acknowledged American-Hungarian psychologist Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi, as a model to help grasp this phenomenon. They motivate their choice of concept with the argument that flow draws on the characteristics of both phenomena – that of immersion and that of engagement. By using familiar schemas of genres, writers foster flow states, because the affective experiences are closely linked to the expectations of the viewer/reader. By making the narrative trajectory unpredictable, thus inviting readers to make their own decisions about the further development of the hypertext, the reader is engaged into interactivity. This paradox of highly structured context (in the form of genres) and relative freedom of choice is central to experiencing flow.[538]

The topic of flow-like experience in slow cinema should be developed further, but here it would exceed the scope of this study. Thus, there are some preliminary assumptions that would deserve further considerations in another framework.

Csikszentmihalyi lists ten components for flow, but he also admits that not all of them have to be present in order to experience this state. If all ten requirements are present, then we can speak of macro-flow, but if only some of them can be identified, then it will be state of "micro-flow". During several points in this dissertation the scalar nature of different phenomena regarding slow cinema was mentioned, and the case of flow will be no exception.

Blissfully Yours offers a case where, as the events in the plot are reduced to a minimum and the

535 Yellowlees Douglas, Andrew Hargadon *The Pleasure Principle: Immersion, Engagement, Flow* in *Proceedings of the 2000 International Hypertext Conference*, New York, p. 155, available at http://ftp.cse.buffalo.edu/users/azhang/disc/disc01/cd1/out/papers/hypertext/p153-douglas.pdf (Accessed 13.04.2014).
536 Ryan, Marie-Laure *Narrative as Virtual Reality: Immersion and Interactivity in Literature and Electronic Media, Baltimore,* 2003 p. 145.
537 Yellowlees Douglas, Andrew Hargadon *The Pleasure Principle: Immersion, Engagement, Flow* in *Proceedings of the 2000 International Hypertext Conference*, New York, p. 155, available at http://ftp.cse.buffalo.edu/users/azhang/disc/disc01/cd1/out/papers/hypertext/p153-douglas.pdf (Accessed 13.04.2014).
538 Yellowlees Douglas, Andrew Hargadon *The Pleasure Principle: Immersion, Engagement, Flow* in *Proceedings of the 2000 International Hypertext Conference*, New York, p. 158, available at http://ftp.cse.buffalo.edu/users/azhang/disc/disc01/cd1/out/papers/hypertext/p153-douglas.pdf (Accessed 13.04.2014).

forehand is given to durational episodes with impressive atmospheric qualities, the viewer is left concentrating on relishing different moods. In doing so they are completely reliant on the shot (in combination with the sound score). However, the shot offers nothing further except for the scenery depicted in it. Thus the viewer enjoys the shot for itself and its surface – its haptic qualities. The story offers no surprises that could jar the viewer from immersion into the atmosphere of the film. It is the absorption into the activity itself that Csikszentmihalyi speaks of as one of the requirements for the state of flow.

The film's unpredictability is driven by the fact that in art-house cinema, more than in other types of film, the viewer is invited to become active in making sense of the film. But the structure necessary for the flow phenomenon to come into existence is the film's act scheme. Regardless of the length of the particular parts, the chosen examples all show that every film demonstrates features of a setup; the plot somehow develops even when the cause-event-schema is very loose. And, at some point, the film comes to an end regardless of whether the story reaches proper closure.

In conclusion – film viewers can not only appreciate different immersion regimes as confirmed by cognitive psychologists, but they can follow the plot, appreciate the metasuspense, and at the same time delve into the mood of the episode. As previously quoted, Plantinga underlines the importance of moods, emotions, bodily responses and cognition in generating film viewing experience. He explicitly addresses the question of cognition and offers examples that social-science research delivers proof that affective and cognitive experience are directly related, and that "moods and emotions constitute ways of "seeing" with significant import."[539] For example, moods can function as a gestalt or schema through which we perceive the fictional world. Consequently, in our search for relevant utterances in a film the mood on the screen (art mood) or the human mood will affect our perception of the relevance.

Plantinga's clear-minded approach justifies the claim herein that in slow cinema, our film viewing experience is governed by a search for relevance. However, if qualities such as moods and emotions, and immersion are deployed as significantly as in *Blissfully Yours*, then these qualities cannot only be justified by Sperber&Wilson's explanation regarding style – they arise within the pursuit of relevance. Surely, the director's reliance on moody shots and the decision to use extended cuts all are signs of a particular personal style, but, as seen from the point of view of a viewer seeking an answer to "Why do I have to watch this particular film?", the Relevance theory might reach its limits. However, that does not mean it was the wrong theory to choose for this endeavour. Rather, we cannot expect that one theory will explain everything.[540] In spite of this, in analyzing the concluding case example *Colossal Youth* in the next chapter,

539 Carl Plantinga *Art Moods and Human Moods in Narrative Cinema* in *New Literary History*, Vol. 43, Nr. 3, Summer 2012, p. 469.
540 Noél Carroll *Prospects for Film Theory: A Personal Assessment* in David Bordwell, Noél Carroll *Post-Theory. Reconstructing Film Studies*, Madison, 1996, p. 41.

this study will once again return to the core assertions of the Relevance theory. As will be demonstrated, it is a particularly well-suited method in explaining why communication in slow cinema can break down, and the viewer might give up on the film.

6. Colossal Youth (dir, Pedro Costa, Portugal, 2006)[542] – what constitutes a "colossal bore"?

The guiding light in analyzing this very unusual film, even within the context of slow cinema, is a remark by Peter Bradshaw of *The Guardian* on how the English press re-named the film *Colossal Youth – Colossal Bore*![543] And this re-naming was done by film-educated viewers – the critics! What then is so unusual about this film? The description of *Colossal Youth* containing such tags as "long shots and long silences, aimless and episodic narrative" could apply to every example of slow cinema. Therefore, it is worth a closer look as to why Costa's film is so unbearable in comparison to a Bela Tarr movie; how this film differs in structure from those of Tsai Ming-Liang, Lisandro Alonso, Apichatpong Weersathekul or Fred Kelemen, and what makes it "something of a rarity".[544]

Greg M. Smith, in his consideration of what makes good theory in a different context underlines that such a theory can only have explanatory power if it explains not only why the film succeeds, but also how the film fails to generate [emotions].[545] Although there will be enough viewers ready to invest an enormous effort in trying to understand *Colossal Youth*, for this project's purposes the film will be used as a kind of concluding remark for the argument on how the narrative structure and cognitive processes involved in film comprehension can generate different paths in seeking relevance in slow films. Therefore, in this context *Colossal Youth* functions as a case example of failed communication. The task of this chapter will be to show how, for a part of the audience, the film's narrative is less effective in demonstrating relevance on any level – of the plot or of the story. However, just because a fraction of the audience gives up on a film, this does not automatically serves as proof of the film's artistic qualities or lack thereof. This response demonstrates that there can be different, very individual reactions to every film, thus supporting the thesis that even in a cinema-educated audience as a group, there can be vast differences in their readiness to accept such a viewing-challenge as *Colossal Youth*.

The chapter opens with a description of the film. The next subchapter contains the argument that this film demonstrates a clear case of scalar tellability, followed by a look at the narrative construction of the film and the degree of narrativity in it. Then – an assessment of the role of contextual assumptions in the comprehension process of the film's plot. The conclusion

542 Pedro Costa was born in 1959. He graduated from Lisbon Theatre and Film School at the end of the 1980s and made his first full-length feature in 1989. Costa did the shooting for his second film *Casa de Lava* (Down to Earth) on the Cape Verde islands in the mid-1990s. After the end of shooting, the residents of the islands gave the film crew presents and letters which they delivered to their relatives living on the outskirts of Lisbon. Here Pedro Costa discovered the Fontainhas, Lisbon's grimmest slum. With the inhabitants of the slum as actors he shot the so-called Fontainhas trilogy, of which *Colossal Youth* is the final part. The other two parts are the films *Ossos* (1997) and *In Vanda´s Room* (2000).

543 Peter Bradshaw *Pedro Costa, the Samuel Beckett of cinema* in *The Guardian*, 17.09.2009, available at http://www.guardian.co.uk/film/filmblog/2009/sep/17/pedro-costa-tate-retrospective (Accessed 17.04.2013).

544 Manohla Dargis *Life, Assembled One Room at a Time* in New York Times, 03.08.2007, available at http://movies.nytimes.com/2007/08/03/movies/03colo.html?_r=0 (Accessed 17.04.2013).

545 Greg M. Smith *Film Structure and the Emotion System*, Cambridge, 2003, p. 8.

will contain a recourse to the Relevance theory, leading to a suggestion of how the contextual information, such as the institutional framework in which the film is screened, shapes how we come to terms with such a challenging film. The chapter will end with a more general note about the idea of the Dominant, which offers a plausible explanation about the way in which the audience can handle the various choices for making sense out of a (slow) film.

A remark in regards to the film's structure: namely, as the claim will be that in comparison to other case studies *Colossal Youth* is not structured around acts, the description of the film's content will contain none as well.

Concerning the visual strategies of the film: it is shot on digital video using no additional lighting, so there is often only one source of light coming from a window or a door. The main character, Ventura, is mostly framed from a low angle and Costa uses only fixed camera positions. With few exceptions, the episodes are shot using one static take.

6.1. Description of the film's structure[546]

The film opens with a darkened image of a house, and someone (Ventura?) throwing furniture from an upper-story window.

Clotilde – a dark woman in her sixties – speaks in a Greek drama-like declamatory style about swimming in her youth. She is holding a knife. While she disappears into the dark, the blade still shines.

Ventura appears against a wall and shouts aloud for Bete – her mother has left him and does not love him anymore. A voice off-screen insists that Ventura is knocking on the wrong door, but he is certain about his choice. While we see a young woman in a dark room washing clothes, we hear Ventura singing outside (?).

An arch in the slums. Ventura greets a man standing on the street. They stand still. A third man - Lento - joins them, and he and Ventura leave. We hear voices and slum noises for the duration of the shot.

Lento and Ventura enter a door. Lento eats in a barely-lit room, Ventura refuses to eat. He complains to Lento that his mother left him; she cut him with a knife. She smashed all his furniture. When Lento asks who it was, Ventura answers that the woman had the face of Clotilde, but it wasn't her. Ventura stands up and leaves.

The next shot begins with Ventura shouting "Vanda! Where do you live?" off-screen, then he enters the shot – an almost abstract image of white houses. Ventura is always filmed from a low angle, fostering the impression of an abstract image. Through several shots he shouts for Vanda, until she answers off-screen. In a dialogue between the two we discover that they gave Vanda a basement apartment, and that Ventura wants a beer and he has money for that.

Vanda's poorly lit room. She sits on a bed, smoking. They watch TV, which remains outside the shot. Ventura asks about her mother – whether she slept here last night – Vanda comments

546 For an easier understanding of the film's description the character's names are used from the beginning onwards.

on what is on TV. Ventura claims that she (his wife) took the suitcases and left. But Vanda reminds Ventura that her mother is buried at Amadora Cemetery. Ventura does not react to this; he just continues to explain that he looked all over for her. Vanda would like to cut back the methadone, she'd like to have her daughter with her, and she'd also like a pension. She has not received any money for 15 months. She'd like a little luck, but does not have any. They continue to comment on the TV. This episode in Vanda's room lasts for five minutes. It cannot be described as proper dialogue because, as it becomes clear from the description of the scene, the two characters do not react to each other's statements.

A dark hallway in Vanda's apartment - the only light falls on red flowers in a vase, generating a Vermeer-like image quality. Ventura says goodbye to his "daughter", Vanda answers with "Goodbye, Papa". From secondary sources it becomes clear that Ventura isn't actually the father of any of the inhabitants of Fontainhas, he just refers to people that way.

In a dark room, where the only light comes through an invisible, small window, Ventura and another man play cards. The man says he needs Ventura to write a love letter to his wife. Ventura begins to recite a poem. It goes as follows: "Nha cretcheu, my love, meeting again will brighten our lives for at least 30 years. I'll return to you renewed and full of strength. I wish I could offer you 100 000 cigarettes, a dozen fancy new dresses, a car, that little lava house you always dreamed of, and a 40-cent bouquet. But most of all drink a bottle of good wine and think of me. The work here never stops. There are a hundred of us now. Two days ago, on my birthday, I thought about you for a long while. Did my letter arrive safely? Still no word from you. I'm waiting. Every day, every minute, I learn beautiful new words just for you and me, tailor-made for us both, like fine silk pajamas. I can only send you one letter a month. Still no word from you. Maybe soon. Sometimes I get scared building these walls, me with a pick and cement, you with your silence, pushing you ever deeper into a pit of forgetting. It hurts to see things I don't want to see. Your lovely hair slips through my fingers like dry grass. Sometimes I feel weak and think I'll forget." The shot lasts for three minutes.

Ventura awakens Lento and recites the above-mentioned poem (love letter). In the darkness they both fall asleep.

Ventura sits in an armchair in the yard of the slum. A woman pours out some water. Ventura says that he brought some chicken, but the woman closes the door behind her without saying anything. Ventura stays outside, thinking, for almost a minute, then leaves.

The white of new houses. A government official comes and tells Ventura that he will get a flat on the fourth floor. It turns out they come from the same region (Cape Verde).

The men enter a new flat with white walls. After Ventura has inspected it, he claims that he needs more bedrooms for his children, but the government officer explains that no children were mentioned in his official papers.

Again in Vanda's bedroom - a static long take. In this episode, which lasts for ten minutes, Vanda tells Ventura about how she gave birth to her daughter and that she has been off the drugs for two years.

Ventura picks up Lento at his home in the slums. The men say nothing; noises of bulldozers and shouting women can be heard.

Both men again sit at a table in a poorly lit room with noises coming in from the outside. At first they do not move or talk. Someone serves them a dish without saying a word. Ventura says that Lento – addressing him as "Son" – should work less hard. They share food, Ventura asks Lento questions about his family, but Lento delivers almost no answers.

Ventura lies in the dark, on the soundtrack we hear him reciting the aforementioned love letter. Whereas in the next shot we see Ventura taking a thermos from a table, the recitation of the love letter can still be heard off-screen. Off-screen Lento encourages him to hurry.

A short episode at a museum. Ventura stands between the paintings. A guard comes and whispers something in his ear. Ventura leaves, the guard wipes the floor after him.

A medium close-up of Ventura that alternates with a medium close-up of the guard. Cut to the next shot where we see Ventura sitting on a couch in the museum. The guard comes in silence and offers Ventura a hand to get up.

Some undefined, poorly lit room in the museum. The guard locks a door and lets Ventura exit through it. No one says anything; only the noise of their steps can be heard.

The camera pans over the trees, through the green we see Ventura coming. In the off-screen his voice recites a story about how he arrived in Portugal in 1972, and began to work in construction. After a cut, the figure of the guard appears. He talks about his pleasant job at the museum and that people like him, and that Ventura does not belong to this world. The episode lasts for almost four minutes.

Ventura enters his home in the slum with a friend. The shot is so dark that the two figures can hardly be discerned.

Ventura and his friend sit at a table and play cards. Ventura (who has a bandage on his head), recites the above-mentioned love letter.

Cut to another camera position. The friend tries to write something on the table. Ventura sets down a bottle of wine, then takes out a record player and puts on a record. A song plays, the men listen. The episode lasts for almost ten minutes.

Back in Vanda's bedroom. Vanda and her daughter sit on one side of the bed talking to each other, while Ventura sits silent on the other side. Ventura tells her that he visited his other daughter, Bete, earlier. She is waiting for her new flat. Vanda tells him about her fear of enclosed spaces. She encourages her little daughter to dance, and pities that she will not be able to raise her. Ventura continues to sit on the bed showing no interest in what Vanda and her daughter are doing. The episode lasts for seven minutes.

With his back turned to the camera Ventura sings a song, and then goes through a door.

In a darkened room Ventura leans against a doorframe. A woman's voice asks him whether he knew that he also had a son, and continues to speak about construction workers. Cut to a dimly lit shot with Ventura and a woman sitting silently on a bed; Ventura gives her some snuff, they both sneeze. The shot lasts for two and a half minutes.

Ventura sits in a red armchair outside of his house; we hear voices from outside the frame. He stands up, looks at something outside the frame and takes some snuff, then passes slowly behind the camera.

Lento sits in the sun in front of a house. Men carry furniture out of the house. In a poorly lit room Nhurro and Ventura stand at a table (it is hardly discernible). Nhurro offers it to Ventura, he also has a nice bedroom set. Nhurro explains that he has changed, no more stealing or parking cars. Nhurro interrogates Ventura about tearing down the Fontainhas. Cut to another shot in the same room, now Ventura stands next to a lamp. Nhurro comes in and sits down next to him. Shortly afterwards – a close-up of Nhurro, who longs to be back together with his mother. She is on withdrawal, but Nhurro cannot come and see her, because there is no one who can replace him at work. She has been relocated; Nhurro has to help her settle into the new flat. (This is one of the rare narrative episodes in the film that tells the story of the inhabitants of Fontainhas being relocated to the new district of Casa del Boba. It is precisely in the middle of the film – around the 78th minute of the 155 minutes running time). Nhurro also talks about his father who always dreamed of returning to Cape Verde. His father thinks that Nhurro will return to Cape Verde, but he himself isn't sure.

Nhurro sits in the dark while Ventura recites the love letter. We also hear Ventura's steps as he goes up and down the room. In the next shot Ventura continues to recite the letter and pace the room. The second part of this three minute shot remains empty and dark, with only some bottles visible on the table and Ventura's steps in the background.

The 81st minute of the film. Stairwell of a house in Casa del Boba. Ventura meets the government officer for the second time.

Large, white room. The officer lists all the positive features of the room and of the neighborhood, which adds a comic tone to the episode, as Ventura underlines it even more by stating that the white room is full of spiders. In the next sequence of close-up shots of Ventura and the officer, the latter insists that this will be a perfect bedroom for Ventura and his wife. He also adds that on occasions such as this not only the wife, but the whole family is present. This reproach adds a kind of a tragic note to the scene, because in due course it becomes clear that Ventura has no family, and that his wife has left him. The officer also explains the duties of the residents. The officer states that a five-room apartment is the best they have, and asks how many children Ventura has. His answer is "I don't know yet". As the officer leaves, Ventura explores the apartment.

Back in the slum. Ventura sits between garbage. Then he stands up and collects some pieces of paper and sits down again. The shot lasts for three minutes.

A short shot with Ventura entering a stairwell.

Vanda's white dining room. She asks Papa (Ventura) to keep what she has to tell him to himself. She wants to bring her daughter to Fatima. Ventura promises to come along and pay for the trip. Vanda speaks about methadone. For the second time in the film she expresses adoration for her husband, who went through a lot with her. He sold everything so she would not

suffer without her drugs. Vanda's husband returns home and eats his supper. Vanda speaks about ghosts. She would like to buy new furniture. Both men sit at the table and do not seem interested in Vanda's talking. Vanda addresses Papa and asks what happened to his furniture at Fontainhas, he answers that Clotilde or a woman that looked just like her (sic!!) smashed it. She also stabbed him in the hand. When Ventura asks Vanda's husband whether they are married, he does not answer. The men share an apple. This episode, shot in one static take, lasts for ten minutes.

(This conversation serves to show that there is no proper dialogue in the film, only bits and pieces of several themes, characters do not answer questions properly, so no proper dialogue is possible).

A dimly lit window in the slum. Someone comes in through the door which is out of the frame and casts some light on to the wall. We hear Ventura ask whether it is Lento, who comes. Cut to a hardly lit room. Ventura and someone else, who is not discernible in the dark, sit. Ventura recites the love letter.

A barely visible image with a lighter spot from the window on the floor in the new apartment. Someone rings the bell and asks to open the door. The voice on the other side of the door asks for some help. We recognize Ventura lying on the floor. He wonders whether it is Paulo.

In the next shot we see Ventura and Paulo standing at a window. Ventura tells him that a guy was here asking money for Paulo's funeral, but on the advice of Paulo's mother he did not give him any. Paulo tells him about a friend to whom he taught everything about begging, but who betrayed him. The episode, filmed in one long static take, lasts for four minutes.

In the next shot the men stand next to the wall. Paulo reproaches Ventura that this flat is too big for him, but Ventura insists that it is for all of them. As Paulo leaves Ventura tells him that it is no use begging because everyone here is poor. This shot lasts for two minutes.

The poorly lit window in the slum again.

Ventura buys chestnuts in the park.

Ventura sits on a bench in the park.

A dark wall, we hear someone hitting something against it (?).

Ventura sits in the slum. The voice of another man can be heard saying they will need matches, tobacco and gas. Soldiers are all over because of a coup d'état. Ventura states that he went to confession and the priest asked him whether he ever ate a human flesh (another example of non-communicative dialogue). The other man says that Yaya was taken by them (police?) and brought into the hills and beaten. Ventura begs him to learn the love letter, but his partner tries to convince Ventura that there is no need got it, because the letter will never reach Cape Verde. There is no more mail service to Cape Verde, because they all are on strike, the other man says. Then he closes the window with a wooden plate and nails it.

Ventura sits in the red armchair in front of his house in the slum with another man standing next to him. The other man says that one more [woman] is gone – Lena's daughter Zita. She poisoned herself. Ventura corrects him that the poison that killed her is what everyone took

long before her birth. The men stand still and gaze outside the frame. A woman comes out of the house and stands next to them. The second man - Xana - says goodbye and leaves. The woman goes back into the house, after a while Ventura follows her. The shot runs for more than two minutes.

The woman from the previous shot sits down in the dark room, Ventura lies on the ground with his head in her lap. They speak about animals that form shadows in the dark (?). When they move to the new white houses they won't be able to see such things in the dark anymore. The shot lasts for three and a half minutes. A short shot of Ventura walking through the slum.

In Vanda's living room. Vanda, her husband, and Ventura sit at the table in silence. The husband smokes a cigarette, Vanda cries and smokes. After two minutes Ventura gets up, because it is hot as he says. Vanda starts to talk – Zita was her sister.

Back in the slum. A close-up of Ventura as he recites the love letter. The recitation of the letter lasts for two minutes. Ventura recites with no emotion or change of tone.

Next shot. His friend, lying on the bed, says that it is an awful letter.

In the hospital. Ventura visits Paulo. Paulo talks about the operation he had, and about his wish to get a decent job – a goldsmith would be the best – , while Ventura, showing no reaction, sits next to the bed. Paulo wants Ventura to go with him to meet his mother. He found out some days ago that he has become grandfather, so he wants his mother to give him his daughter's address. Paulo speaks slowly and in a declamatory style. The static shot lasts for more than six minutes.

Ventura sits on the stairs in a stairwell, almost in the dark. Some people pass by; some invisible voices can be heard. Then he gets up and ascends. The shot lasts for two minutes.

In Ventura's room back in the slum. His mate comes in with a heater – tonight they will sleep in warmth. The mate says – Ventura will never get the letter sent because the mate cannot learn it and cannot write it, and Ventura isn't able write it down either. The mate goes to get some electricity.

Ventura's mate climbs down an electricity post.

Ventura unties the white cloth he had around his head.

In the dark we barely see Ventura's mate lying on the ground next to the electricity post.

In Vanda's bedroom. While Ventura lies on her bed, she says aloud that on Monday she has to go to Social Security. She also has to go to the cemetery to clean her mother's and Zita's graves. She does not have the courage to deal with Zita's. Mourning for Zita is like mourning for herself. Vanda begins to polish Ventura's (?) shoes. Ventura sits down. The shot lasts for almost four minutes.

In front of Ventura's house. He comes with a luggage carrier and goes in.

Ventura and a woman sit down behind a table containing supper. Ventura tells his daughter that he brought some grilled chicken to her mother in the hospital on the day she was born. How did he win her mother's heart, she asks. Ventura tells the story – the episode, shot in three shots, lasts for two minutes.

Ventura walks down a street in Fontainhas.
Ventura ascends the stairs in the new house.
Lento opens a door (in the slum) and lets Ventura in.
Lento and Ventura stand in a burned out room, holding hands. In a dialogue of almost poetic quality, Ventura talks of how he heard that Lento and his family of four children jumped out of the window during the fire.
Lento shows Ventura the children's room, where they all gathered and waited for help, but nobody came. Ventura invites him to come live in his big, new flat – there is enough space for all his children, but he declines. He begins to recite the love letter "I wish I could offer you 100 000 cigarettes…". After several lines, there is a cut.
Lento and Ventura in another burned out room. A medium close-up of the men. This is the bedroom where it all began.
The men say farewell to each other.
The camera pans over a river, a park and wealthy homes in the background. Ventura sits in a boat that is steered by another man. The boat floats out of the frame.
Ventura knocks at Vanda's door, she lets him in. She has to leave for a cleaning job, so she lets Ventura stay with her daughter. Before leaving Vanda briefly listens at the door. Then she opens the neighbor's door and goes in.
Ventura briefly stands in Vanda's living room in the darkness, then leaves.
Ventura lies on Vanda's bed in her bedroom. Vanda's daughter plays by the bedside. The End.

6.2. Degree of tellability

The main difference between *Colossal Youth* and the other case examples in this study can be determined if we compare the relationship between the tellability of the events onscreen and the way they are arranged into a plot (*syuzhet*). David Herman has pinpointed the importance of both aspects in studying narrative and in looking for new ways to model the interrelations between fabula and *suyzhet*.[547] In the case of an unusual film such as this, this claim will receive justification.
To begin, the degree of tellability of the events in the film should be considered. To recapitulate, the understanding of tellability herein follows the Ryan's definition, who sees it as an inherent quality of activities that make the stories worth telling.[548]
As is clear from the film's description, we witness episodes with an obviously very low level of tellability (for example: Ventura standing in an arch in the slum; Ventura with a friend sitting at a table saying nothing; men carrying furniture out of the house), which are alternated with episodes with a higher (though still very different) level of tellability (for example: Vanda talking about giving birth to her daughter; the government officer's presentation of the new

547 David Herman *Story Logic: Problems and Possibilities of Narrative*, Lincoln, 2002, p. 104.
548 Marie-Laure Ryan *Tellability* in David Herman, Manfred Jahn, and Marie-Laure Ryan (eds.) Routledge Encyclopedia of Narrative Theory, London, 2005 p. 589.

flat to Ventura; Paulo in the hospital, Lento's story about the fire in his flat). Thus, this concept (similar to narrativity) cannot be defined as a monolithic entity. Instead, we have to consider this feature as displaying different degrees of quality.

The story about the death of Vanda's sister Zita, mentioned several times in the film, acquires a kind of principal narrative development. However, *Colossal Youth* also demonstrates that a film's elements contribute decisively to the process of how a plot acquires tellability, but only if the contextual knowledge is available to the viewer. Without it, these elements demonstrate no degree of tellability whatsoever, and herein lies the principal difference with the film *Goodbye, Dragon Inn*. In *Goodbye, Dragon Inn* contextual knowledge supplemented the story and enhanced its tellability, whereas in *Colossal Youth* the action onscreen often doesn't reveal anything to the audience. The example in question is the verse Ventura keeps reciting throughout the film "Nha cretcheu, my love, meeting again will brighten our lives for at least 30 years….". As Pedro Costa explains, it is partly composed of lines from a poem by French poet Robert Desnos, and it is partly Ventura's own contribution. For the director, both men were to meet because:

> Both are condemned, destroyed men, ghosts of other men that despite torture, madness and exploitation still managed to resist. This love letter had to become a moral and political testament, a declaration of war.[549]

However, what we are left with is the almost monotone repetition. Jonathan Romney assigns it "an oracular ring" and a "spell, a magic cure for nostalgic solitude".[550] This is a case where the repetition on the auditory level enhances the immersion into the image and the fact that we cannot classify these love letter episodes into a linear cause-and-effect chain contributes even more to our concentration on the image and its sonic qualities.

But this conclusion already leads to another issue, which is indispensable in analyzing the difficult narratives of slow cinema. It is that of eventfulness or narrativity, because "tellability attaches to the configurations of facts and narrativity to sequences representing configurations of facts."[551]

6.3. Chronological order as a condition for narrativity

In the previous analysis the question of eventfulness was addressed (as it has been called by Wolf Schmid and Peter Hühn), and "being a narrative" as put by Ryan. Concerning *Colossal Youth*, the sequencing of events depicted in the shots seems to highlight the problem once again. Assuming that the film is screened in a cinema, the audience as experienced cinema-viewers, taking into account their intuition about filmic structures, will expect an art film regardless of

549 Pedro Costa *Juventude em March*/*Colossal Youth* in the Tate Modern *Pedro Costa Retrospective Booklet*, 2009, p. 8.
550 Jonathan Romney *Exile and the kingdom: Colossal Youth* in *Sight and Sound*, June 2008, available at http://old.bfi.org.uk/sightandsound/review/4335 (Accessed 10.04.2013).
551 David Herman *Story Logic: Problems and Possibilities of Narrative*, Lincoln, 2002, p. 100.

how challenging it may be. On a closer inspection, however, the greatest difficulties with the film in question concern its form as a purposeful narrative.
The problem is as Meir Sternberg explained in his watershed article *Time and Narrative*:

> "To be sure, nobody who has thought about narrative structure and interpretation is likely to deny that for narrative to make sense as narrative, it must make chronological sense. For the events composing it do not fall into some line of world-time, however problematic their alignment and however appealing their alternative arrangement, then narrativity itself disappears." [552]

And this is the problem the viewer of *Colossal Youth* is faced with. The first question to be addressed is that of minimal condition of narrativity, with a change of state usually regarded as one of the conditions. That implies that there has to be a temporal structure between the states and some kind of similarity between the initial and the final situation.[553]
In *Colossal Youth*, except for the information about Zita's death and Vanda's grief in the following episodes, the temporal ordering of the other episodes remains unclear as no clear cause-and-effect chain can be established. Take the scenes with Ventura – there are some where he has a bandaged head – these scenes seem to be set in the past, after the accident he had at the construction site of the art museum. However, there are no markers for this fact – if we regard the bandage as a marker, it is obviously not set in the scene in a way that the audience would make it out to be a temporal marker. (In this regard the issue of the mix-up of kernels and satellites can be brought up once again, as it was done in the analysis of *Liverpool*, where the importance of events for the further development of the plot where not underlined by the staging.)

Interestingly, Schmid eliminates the presence of a causal connection between the states from his definition of the minimal condition of narrativity, because the causality between them is often not clearly present in the text, and can only be inferred by the reader.[554] Surely in cinema the effects of particular causes are often explicitly depicted onscreen. For example, when we see Ventura in a stairwell, but in the next shot he sits in Vanda's bedroom, we can conclude a causal relation between these two shots. But for the rest of the film, the only clear clue we have is Ventura – an elderly worker from Cape Verde and an inhabitant of Fontainhas, how he rambles through the slum and through the newly-built district of Casa al Boba where the former inhabitants of Fontainhas are relocated. Ventura is constantly mixing-up names and identities, all the people he meets he calls his children, and the identity of his wife remains unknown as Ventura refers to her as "Clotilde, or a woman who looked like Clotilde". As one can learn only from the reviews, the film is partly set in the past, during the "Carnation Revolution"

552 Meir Sternberg *Telling in Time (I): Chronology and Narrative Theory* in *Poetics Today*, Vol.11, No. 4, Winter 1990, p. 903.
553 Wolf Schmid *Narrativity and Eventfulness* in Tom Kindt, Hans-Harald Müller (eds.) *What Is Narratology? Questions and Answers Regarding the Status of a Theory*, Berlin, 2003, p. 19.
554 Wolf Schmid *Narrativity and Eventfulness* in Tom Kindt, Hans-Harald Müller (eds.) *What Is Narratology? Questions and Answers Regarding the Status of a Theory*, Berlin, 2003, p. 20.

of April 25, 1974, but Costa distributes no markers for the scenes set in the 1970s. So he moves back and forth in time, but that isn't obvious from the film itself. The division between the past and present breaks down towards the end of the film, when Lento, who has long been dead (we may miss this fact because it is not fore-grounded by the story's structure), visits Ventura in his new home.

The concept best suited for the classification of such scenes and which helps to understand the temporal ordering in *Colossal Youth* is that of polychromic narration as developed by David Herman. These are narratives where certain events have no fixed position in the temporal frame of the story – they stay indeterminate.[555] Films form polychromic narration by leaving out certain information that would foster the linear narrativity of the story.[556]

Colossal Youth is the only one of the slow cinema examples herein that has such features – all the other films demonstrate very linear narrative development. As Herman points out, such achronological events cannot be described using the classical narrative theory at hand. The question remains: what is the function of this fuzzy temporality in this particular film? It seems that in the case of *Colossal Youth* we can agree with David Herman who acknowledges that fuzzy temporality is often just that – fuzzy temporality, which resists any attempts for linearizing the events.[557] The theory herein is that this chronological ordering, as it turns our attention away from linear plot developments, contributes to the audience's concentration on the atmosphere of the film and the materiality of the image. Thus *Colossal Youth* would be a particularly good example for a further study on the haptic qualities of slow cinema.

Judging the degree of narrativity in *Colossal Youth* and comparing it to the other case examples, we have to return to the contention expressed again and again during this study. Namely, that in the case of slow cinema examples we have to speak not only about tellability as a scalar category, but also about narrativity as a feature possessing a scalar quality.

So the film *Fallen*, with its search for the reasons for a young woman's suicide, displays clear-cut events – the woman jumps into the river and the only witness – Matiss – begins to search for her identity and the reasons behind the tragic deed. *Fallen* possesses both – the narrative in its organization posits a case of clear narrativity (also meaning its narrative organization can be laid out across Kristin Thompson's four act scheme), and the events as such have a high level of tellability (they initiate events that lead to other events, constituting change and new situations.)

In comparison, *The Turin Horse* is a more complex case of the relationship between tellability and narrativity. For example, in the episode at the end of day one: "In the darkness with only the stove burning, they talk about the woodworms, which they don't hear for the first time in 58 years. They don't know what to make out of it." After multiple viewings it becomes clear that precisely at this early point in the film – the 30th minute, the first sign that the world is

555 David Herman *Story Logic: Problems and Possibilities of Narrative*, Lincoln, 2002, p. 212.
556 Ibid., p. 245.
557 Ibid., p. 220.

coming to an end appears. Thus, such a minuscule change in the Ohlsdorfers' everyday routine as the disappearance of woodworms constitutes a change and a narrative event. However, in assessing the tellability of this event as its inherent feature, we come to a conclusion that it is very low. In terms of the story's form though, divided into six days with an obvious development along chronological lines, it's consistent with our expectations towards a film and thus we can attest a high level of narrativity to the plot of *The Turin Horse*.

In narrative theory one also speaks of non-narrative, and the claim herein is that one of the reasons why the viewing of *Colossal Youth* may result in an audience walk out is the non-narrative form of this film. The reason for that can be found on two levels. The depicted events, as explained above, often show a low level of tellability. Additionally, although *Colossal Youth* has a film's structure because the events follow each other in a 2.5 hour timeframe, they remain mostly unrelated, or their relationships cannot be discerned right away. Even more, if we take change as the decisive marker for a narrative then *Colossal Youth* is a non-narrative, because here we encounter no "modification of the state."[558]

Thus, if we regard the slow films as a group as compared to mainstream Hollywood cinema, then they all seem to have very loose structure and barely detectable changes in their stories. Only as compared to each other and set against each other, the events in these films start to acquire different degrees of tellability. And also, the narrative construction of the examples demonstrates that the events can be organized using different levels of looseness.

We can therefore conclude that it's not the level of tellibility of the events themselves, but the demand that a film be constructed as a narrative entity that is a more decisive condition for a film to be perceived as a proper story, which in turn generates interest in the viewer about further narrative developments and thus encourages him to remain in his seat. This view is consistent with Schmid's claim that a change of state can be located on story-level as well as on the level of discourse. However, the requirement for a change on the level of discourse is decisive for a minimal condition of narrativity.[559]

These different degrees of tellability and narrativity clearly have to have an impact on how and whether interest in the story can develop.

6.4. Suspense or interest?

Not surprisingly, the fact that long stretches of *Colossal Youth* show fuzzy temporality has consequences for a viewer's suspense or even interest in what happens next. In the previous chapter the concept of suspense was introduced and applied to slow cinema. One of the most important theses was that the pure linearity of the plots in these films runs counter to the idea of suspense. But the fuzzy temporality in *Colossal Youth* is an even more complicated

558 René Audet *Narrativity: Away from story, close to eventfulness* in René Audet, Claude Romano, Laurence Dreyfus, Carl Therrien, Hugues Marchal *Narrativity: How visual Arts, Cinema and Literature are telling the world today*, Paris, 2007, p. 18

559 Wolf Schmid *Narrativity and Eventfulness* in Tom Kindt, Hans-Harald Müller (eds.) *What Is Narratology? Questions and Answers Regarding the Status of a Theory*, Berlin, 2003, p. 22.

case. First of all, as some kind of development can only be attested to several themes (Zita's death, for example), and the goals and wishes of the other characters are not expressed, no emotional involvement with the characters can develop. The fact that the narrative succession of the episodes remains mostly unclear makes it even harder to develop interest in the film.
It is far easier to develop empathy for Vanda because the stories she shares from her life touch upon such vital themes as giving birth to a child, raising a child, and the death of a close relative. In comparison, Ventura, with his declamatory-style speeches and detached attitude towards the grave events of his life, fails to develop any emotional connection with the viewer.
Bordwell suggests speaking about suspense on a micro-level, which can be located in single shots or episodes. Thus, for example, the repetitive love letter scenes can create suspense out of curiosity about whether there will be change across the numerous shots with Ventura reciting. However, this can also be considered a feature of meta-suspense, as it concerns the artistic solutions chosen by the filmmaker.

6.5. The importance of contextual assumptions

In regards to the issue of tellability the question of context was touched upon, however, this issue is even more crucial if discussed within the framework of narrativity, because it fosters our understanding of how the causal chain between different events can be built.
Peter Hühn, in speaking of the eventfulness of the text underlines its dependence on the contextual knowledge – an event can be classified as such only with respect to its social, cultural and historical setting.[560] He maintains:

> …eventfulness is ultimately not a textual property, but has to be inferred and constituted by readers through relating the textual cues to their knowledge of the period. Although the text can thus be seen to provide appropriate cues, readers may miss the point of the event, and in particular they may fail to appreciate the relevance and difficulty of the transition if they are ignorant of the contemporary social and ideological context of the novel or if they apply an inappropriate frame of reference.[561]

What is the frame of reference for Ventura's wanderings? Who are all these people he calls his children? Is Ventura the only link between them or is there a broader context for these people's stories? We do not receive any explanation from the film itself. In order to gain one we have to address extra-cinematic sources such as interviews with the filmmaker or articles written by film critics. In a retrospective booklet from the Tate Modern Costa explained his urge to shoot this film as follows:

> I realized that the April 25th Revolution, that for me was a moment of lyrical exaltation

560 John Pier, José Ángel García Landa: Introduction. John Pier, José Ángel García Landa (ed.): Theorizing Narrativity, 2008, p. 11.
561 Peter Hühn *Functions and Forms of Eventfulness in Narrative Fiction* in John Pier, Ángel Garcia Landa (eds.) *Theorizing Narrativity*, Berlin, 2011, p. 155.

> and enthusiasm, constituted a nightmare for Ventura. I was a kid at the time. I went out to the streets, demonstrating, and, probably, already dreaming about cinema. A while ago, I looked for some photographs of the May 1st crowds with thousands of people celebrating. It's incredible – you don't see a single black face. Where were they? Ventura told me that they were all huddled together, absolutely terrified, hidden in the Estrella Garden, worried about their future. It is precisely because I film these things in this manner that I don't believe in democracy. No one in Fontainhas believes in democracy. People like Ventura built the banks, museums, theatres, schools, and condominiums of the bourgeoisie. And it's precisely what they helped build that defeated them. You have the cruellest proof of this failure in all the other rooms, the agony of Paulo, Vanda, Zita, the permanent collapse of these rooms.[562]

Or, as film critic Denise Levertov explains in a more general manner "Costa's intent in *Colossal Youth* is to tell the history that nobody has yet told, the story of the immigrants of Ventura's generation who were lost in the shuffle of Portugal's transformation in the mid-1970s from a dictatorship to a liberal democracy."[563]

This then is an important issue which has to be raised – however the point (tellability) of *Colossal Youth* can only be discovered with these explanations in mind. In this regard, Costa's film resembles conceptual art where often the work itself can only be understood through an interpretation delivered by the curator or the artist himself.

In analyzing *Goodbye Dragon Inn* the importance of the contextual assumptions were pointed out, but this case example is different. Namely, in Tsai Ming-Liang's film the additional information on Taiwanese history and film culture built a supplementary level for those viewers who had this information at hand. However, the director's main concern – the closing of the cinema and the decline of film culture – can also be understood without them. In comparison, the political message Costa tries to convey in *Colossal Youth*, may remain unclear for a large part of the audience as it is not explicitly addressed in any of the film's episodes. For that two other factors – the events Costa chooses to include in the film (tellability) and their line-up (narrativity) – are also accountable. Consequently, viewers may have the impression that the film is "totally boring".

Interestingly, film theoretician Steven Shaviro's accusation is that there is provocativeness missing in contemporary slow cinema, but the claim herein is that we can find it in Pedro Costa's work. But he is a singular case, because his work is so exceptional and resides on the far edge of slow cinema. His predecessors were Jean Luc Godard, Luis Bunuel, Dusan Makavejev, Jean Marie Straub and Danielle Huillet in Europe, and Russ Meyer, Paul Morrissey and John Waters in the USA in the 1960s and 1970s.[564]

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562 Pedro Costa *Juventude em March* / *Colossal Youth* in Tate Modern *Pedro Costa Retrospective Booklet*, 2009, p. 8-9.

563 Darren Hughes *Pedro Costa's "Vanda Trilogy" and the limits of narrative cinema as a contemplative art* in Darren Hughes *Long Pauses*, available at http://www.longpauses.com/costas-vanda-trilogy/ (Accessed 14.04.2013).

564 András Bálint Kovács *Screening Modernism. European Art Cinema, 1950 – 1980*, Chicago, 2007, p. 32.

6.6. Non-existence of the act scheme

Not surprisingly, all these explications about the context of the film's plot as delivered by Costa and Levertov also have consequences for discerning the film's structure. Without them, *Colossal Youth* remains an assemblage of fragments. Although slow cinema films often may lack tight cause-and-effect chains, in the other case examples one can still make out a structure with a longer set-up and other parts of roughly the same length, where the turning points not so much push the story in a new direction but function as an alarm that often awakens the viewer from the automatism of perception. But in *Colossal Youth* no such structure can be discovered. It can be described as one large chunk of film – 150 minutes – with no set-up, no further development, and no turning points. One cannot even talk of Ventura as a character found in art cinema, however airy and vague he might be. There are moments in these fragments where one can discern bits of story – that Vanda stopped taking heroin and is now on methadone constitutes a story to the viewers who know Costa's previous film *In Vanda´s room*. Some traces of a linear narrative can also be made out in the storyline with the government agent who shows Ventura his new flat. However, the extreme plot fragmentation makes it impossible to detect the act scheme in this particular example. But, as this study began with the thesis that one can make out act structure in slow cinema, this fact is not regarded with frustration. The conclusion that *Colossal Youth* obviously does not bend to this law of screenwriting and rather serves as proof that the creativity of artists outnumbers the possibilities the theoreticians can invent is entirely welcome.

But what are the consequences of this plot construction in comprehending the story? Episodic structuring of the plot and the loosening of the cause-and-effect chain are characteristic to the art cinema narration as stated by David Bordwell in his watershed book *Narration in the Fiction film*. But in *Colossal Youth* these ties are even looser and the fragments even more disconnected to each other. This exceptional film then makes heavy demands on its audience, which can best be described using the Relevance theory, concerning the use of context in the comprehension process.

6.7. A Relevance theory perspective

As underlined several times, the main aspect of interest in this study is the functionality of the artistic features we can discover in slow cinema. For that, the Relevance theory's perspective has to be taken into account. In their article *Pragmatics and Time*, Deirdre Wilson and Dan Sperber also address cases when there are no ready-made schemas to guide the interpretation process as it is with *Colossal Youth*. The theoreticians assert that in nonstandard cases the facts expressed in the utterance must contribute somehow to overall relevance. The process taking place herein they describe as follows:

> If the linguistically encoded information is too vague, or too incomplete, to yield an interpretation consistent with the communicative principle of relevance, it will be enriched using immediately accessible contextual assumptions, to a point where it is relevant enough.[565]

What was meant by the communicative principle of relevance? It states that "every utterance [..] creates a presumption of relevance in the hearer."[566] However, the hearer does not pursue maximum relevance but only optimal relevance because of stylistic preferences (in this case art house cinema), and the speaker may not have expressed himself in the most economical way with which to make the relevance maximally possible.

Obviously, the speaker – let's heuristically name him Pedro Costa[567] – regards this story of Ventura and his neighbours worth telling, and thus expects that in would also be optimally relevant for his audience.

The reformulation of the title *Colossal Youth* into *Colossal Bore* by film journalists indicates that the audience may have some problems in ascribing relevance to the plot. As the artistic structure of the film, with its long stretches of no tellability and no causal chains between different episodes, suggests, in terms of Relevance theory the "linguistic information", as Wilson & Sperber call it, is obviously too vague in terms of verbal utterances to be ascribed relevance right away. And, as the film does not belong to a particular genre that could function as a schema leading the search for relevance, the viewer obviously has to consult other story contexts. But, as mentioned, we arrive at an impossible problem because of the divergence of what can be seen onscreen and the actual intent of the director. It was exemplified best above with Costa's quotation about his intentions in making this film. We cannot simply discover the contextual knowledge needed in order to obtain optimum relevance for the events onscreen from the activities themselves. A much broader perspective (and experience in Portuguese history) is needed in order to assess relevance to the events and characters in Costa's film. Only a very small segment of an international audience will have that at their disposal. In this particular case we want to draw on the idea expressed by Livia Polanyi. Although she comes from the field of discourse linguistics and is relaying only on natural language narratives in her research, her explanation of the decisive constrains put on stories by the speaker's culture helps to explain the possible breakdown of communication during the screening of *Colossal Youth*. Polanyi holds that "What is 'interesting' is culturally, socially, and personally determined."[568] She explains that culturally interesting material will be of concern only to the

565 Deirdre Wilson, Dan Sperber *Pragmatics and Time* in Deirdre Wilson, Dan Sperber *Meaning and Relevance*, London, 2012, p. 183.
566 Ibid., p. 177.
567 About the issue of the author in film see chapter about the film xxx.
568 Livia Polanyi *So What´s the Point*? in *Semiotica* Vol. 25 , Nr. 3/ 4, 1979, p. 211.

participants of a particular culture; socially interesting material, which is of more limited appeal, will arouse interest in a given social group; personally interesting material has the narrowest appeal of all and will differ among the individuals.[569] The argument herein is that the reasons behind an audience member's decision to stop watching a film can be located between these three categories of interest intersecting with the tellability of events and their organization into a narrative structure (counting cinematic staging as a part of this category). Following the train of thought developed by Polanyi, who chooses the categories *narrative, or event structure* and *descriptive structure* to describe the kinds of information in stories, the study here regards these as types that help to contextualize the information found in stories, or in films. We do however need to delve into the third kind of information as formulated by Polanyi – that of *evaluative* structure. It expresses "what the narrator feels is crucial information in the story he is telling."[570] Polanyi asserts that without the narrator's evaluation functioning as contextualizing information for the events, a story is just an assemblage of details with no way of understanding the point. Leaving aside concepts such as cinematic narrator and enunciator as they would not contribute much to the issue in question, we skip to the study's contention that one of the reasons for disappointment in *Colossal Youth* is the fact that, although Costa's personal interest in the inhabitants of Fontainhas may justify his choice in making a film about them, the viewer may miss the evaluative structure – or director's voice – throughout the story. Frankly, all staging choices are interpreted as the director's signature, but in this case the question remains if artistic signature is reason enough to sustain interest in the story. For cinema aficionados Costa's artistic signature may be context enough to spend 2.5 hours in the cinema, but the main concern here is that part of the audience for whom the screening becomes boring and cause to leave. In fact, the claim herein is that this will more often be the case during the film's screening abroad than in Costa's native country. But keep in mind that in both situations we are still speaking of cinema-educated audiences who are ready to invest more effort into understanding the austere, plot-less films of slow cinema. Or, as Polanyi states: "what stories can really be about is, to a very significant extent, culturally constrained."[571]

(Another side note that needs to be stressed is that whereas subjects and themes for films often come from specific cultural contexts, the filmic devices used are universal, although certain schools and periods show certain stylistic preferences.[572])

The objection can be made that as *Colossal Youth* obviously leaves all the traditional tracks of narrative construction behind, maybe it is not the search for relevance that has to be taken as the guiding principle for experiencing such a film. If we consider that such issues as haptic cinema and immersion into the image as exemplified in the case study of *Blissfully Yours* may also be

569 Livia Polanyi *So What´s the Point*? in *Semiotica* Vol. 25 , Nr. 3/ 4, 1979, p. 211-212.
570 Ibid., p. 209.
571 Livia Polanyi *So What's the Point*? in *Semiotica* Vol. 25 , Nr. 3/ 4, 1979, p. 207.
572 For more on this issue see David Bordwell *Figures Traced in Light: On Cinematic Staging*, Berkeley, 2005, p. 242-249.

applied to this film, then we should eschew the Relevance theory out of our methodological tool kit. However, the claim here is that these different film perception regimes may function simultaneously, and a better question would be which way a particular viewer would prefer to handle the film. Speaking in theoretical terms, the concept of the dominant helps to grasp the problem.

6.8. The Dominant as a guiding principle

Russian Structuralist Roman Jacobson acknowledges that the dominant is one of the most crucial, elaborated and productive concepts of the Russian Formalist Theory.[573] Actually, Jacobson borrowed the idea of the dominant from Jurij Tynjanov, who explained that in every work of art some elements are placed in the foreground – they form the dominant, and all the other remaining elements bow to it.[574] In recent literary theory, the distinguished literary theorist Meir Sternberg works with the notion of the dominant, but also sees the concept as very rigid one – the dominant axis and force always overtakes other elements.[575]

The claim here is that a crucial differentiation has to be made. Namely, we can find a dominant force in the construction of an artwork as named by literary scholars, and we can also make out a dominant from the several modes possible for experiencing a film.

In terms of plot, the notions of plot (tellability and narrativity) and description were touched upon.

The suggestion herein is that the dominant in slow cinema is very fluid – during certain stretches of the plot the plot dominates, whereas description dominates during others. The strength or weakness of narrativity and tellability in each passage also influences the dominant force. For example, the episodes in *Liverpool* with Farrel moving from one location to the next (such as on the lorry) possesses low tellability and are therefore more dominated by description than the episodes with Farrel in his native village meeting his family, which hold more eventfulness and thus comply more to the developing plot. In general, one might say that most of the episodes in slow cinema containing characters going from one place to another in full duration are dominated by a low degree of tellability and thus can be called description.

In terms of coming to grips with slow films the study suggests different possibilities such as relishing the present, devotion to the emotion created or the immersion into the image. However, the starting point and the reason for choosing the Relevance theory as the operating

573 Roman Jakobson *The Dominant* in Ladislav Matejka, Krystyna Pomorska (eds.) *Readings in Russian Poetics: Formalist and Structuralist View*, Chicago, 2002, p. 82.
574 Jurij Tynjanov *On Literary Evolution* in Ladislav Matejka, Krystyna Pomorska (eds.) *Readings in Russian Poetics: Formalist and Structuralist View*, Chicago, 2002, p. 72.
575 Meir Sternberg *How Narrativity Makes a Difference* in *Narrative*, Vol.9, No.2, May 2001, p. 121.

manual was the assumption that the cause-and-effect chain is the most powerful principle[576] in how viewers assess a film. As Peterson summarizes – "perceivers impose order if they cannot discover it",[577] – an assumption that holds true for any film regardless of how challenging it might be. Our experience as film viewers induces us to find some kind of order in the plot.[578] At the same time, all my case examples demonstrate that the narrative scheme is just one of the options the viewer has at his disposal.

During the analysis of *Colossal Youth* it was mentioned that the way in which the importance of the film's story can be appreciated is close to conceptual art. Flanagan, in speaking about Costa's work names Andy Warhol as his predecessor[579] and thus makes a clear linkage between Costa and experimental cinema. But in this type of art the plot is clearly only one option amongst others.[580] The viewers who choose the search for relevance as their guiding light will become part of the audience that leaves the cinema and consequently refers to the film as *Colossal Bore*.

But then the question arises of whether it's possible to predict which strategy of experiencing a film the viewer will choose? The proposal here is that the dominant can partly be predicted by the institutional framework in which the film is screened, and by the artistic tradition to which it belongs. However, for the film in question here the screening venue might be the most important clue that defines not only the strategy chosen to make sense out of the film, but also the tolerance the viewer is ready to show towards *Colossal Youth*.

6.9. Importance of the institutional framework

In the introduction to the analytical models that might be deployed in the study, the importance of "institutional constraints", as Roger Odin named the film comprehension process, was underlined. Meir Sternberg also acknowledges the fundamental significance of the framework for understanding the form.[581]

Namely, if *Colossal Youth* is screened within the framework of a film festival or at an art house cinema, then the urge to discover some kind of a narrative might be the dominant guiding principle for understanding the film. Consequently, the process of communication might result in a viewer's dissatisfaction. However, if *Colossal Youth* were to be screened at an art museum

576 James Peterson *Dreams of Chaos, Visions of Order: Understanding the American Avant-Garde Cinema*. Detroit, 1994, p. 24.
577 James Peterson *Dreams of Chaos, Visions of Order: Understanding the American Avant-Garde Cinema*. Detroit, 1994, p. 24.
578 Ibid., p. 25.
579 Matthew Flanagan: *Slow Cinema's: Temporality and Style in Contemporary Art and Experimental Film* , 2012, University of Exeter, p. 49, available at https://ore.exeter.ac.uk/repository/handle/10036/4432 (Accessed May 2013) .
580 Ibid., p. 40.
581 Meir Sternberg *Reconceptualising narratology. Arguments for a Functionalist and Constructivist Approach to Narrative* in *Enthymema*, IV 2011, p. 46.

or during an experimental cinema program where “other” strategies shape the understanding of the artwork, then the outcome might be not so miserable for the viewer. As several slow cinema directors also produce video works for international art institutions, this supposition seems justified. Even more, as the roots of slow cinema as explained in the introduction lie partly in structural film, the classification of *Colossal Youth* somewhere between art house and video art, only nourishes the proposal to regard this case example as lying on the far end of slow cinema. In choosing Costa’s film as a concluding example for this study demonstrates convincingly how diverse this supposedly homogenous group “slow cinema” can be.

For the concluding chapter in this study about slow narration the proposal is a different view on these films. This time, the methodology applied is statistical style analysis, which obviously does not constitute the standard activity of a film viewer during screening. However, if the average shot lengths obtained from the application of statistical style analysis are linked to the insights gained about act structure in these case studies, the results add to our understanding of the narratives of slow cinema.

III. Statistical Style Analysis and proof of parametricity

In all the literature about slow cinema the long take is mentioned as its foremost stylistic feature. The possibilities of theorizing on this issue are twofold. On one hand, the question about the long take foregrounds the effects such shots create. One can traditionally quote André Bazin, who emphasizes the liberation of the gaze of the viewer as enabled by the long take – as a result the viewer can choose where to focus his gaze. It also adds to the de-dramatised narration because no action or landscape is so unimportant that it should be omitted, as Wim Wenders has stated.[582] This line of argument leads to the question about the effect of realism created through the long take, but this topic will not be pursued in this project.[583]

On the other hand, with the emergence of digital humanities the issue of the long take has been approached with the help of statistics. British film scholar Barry Salt developed a method of statistical style analysis for measuring the so-called average shot length (ASL) of a film more than forty years ago. He first proposed it as an analytical tool in his thesis *The Analysis of Style in the Cinema* in 1968[584], but his idea received wider recognition only after being published in *Film Quarterly* in the 1974 article *Statistical Style Analysis of Motion Pictures*. The method was very simple: in order to obtain the ASL values, Salt proposed to count the shots in the film. Then the film's length is divided by the number of shots. However, at the beginning of this century, an online application called Cinemetrics was developed by Latvians Yuri Tsivian and Gunars Civjans, which enables researchers to measure films using contemporary electrical devices and obtain digital data. Cinemetrics offers researchers two possibilities. In the simple mode of Cinemetrics the duration of the shot has to be registered during the film viewing; in the advanced mode the scale of the shot has to also be recognized[585]. A detailed explanation of the graphs will follow in the next chapter.

Mainly, statistical style analysis is a quantitative method that is also being used in musicology and literature studies and is applied in three cases: for the recognition of stylistic patterns; to help establish authorship; and to support the classification of artworks in their chronological order.[586]

Cinemetrics is an open access program, so that the data on its homepage constitutes a joint effort of more than 500 film scholars from around the world. But the evaluation of the data delineates the limits of a traditional film scholar. Namely, only scholars with training in statistics can get out the most of the data. In order to make the Cinemetrics data useful for this research project, the choice was made to concentrate on those data assessment methods that can be

582 Wim Wenders *Drei Rivalen. The Tall Man* in *Emotion Pictures. Essays und Filmkritiken*. 1986-1984. Frankfurt a. M., 1986.

583 For more information about this issue see Tiago Magalhães de Luca *Realisms of the Senses. Tendency in Contemporary World Cinema*, University of Leeds, 2011, availabe at http://etheses.whiterose.ac.uk/1760/ (accessed May 2013).

584 Barry Salt *Moving Into Pictures. More on Film History, Style, and Analysis*, London, 2006, p. 13-16.

585 As in most cases we are dealing with moving camera, it is not possible to use the advanced mode of Cinemetrics in case of slow cinema.

586 Warren Buckland, Thomas Elsaesser *Studying Contemporary American Film: A Guide to Movie Analysis*, London, 2002, pp. 101-16, available at http://cinemetrics.lv/buckland.php (Accessed 1.05.2013).

directly connected to the analysis of the narratives of the films in question.

The aim of this chapter is to analyse the shot lengths in the film examples and to place them in relation to each other. Additionally, the aim is to detect whether there is a connection between the length of the shot and its narrative content. The chapters that explored the four-act-scheme revealed that in slow cinema films there are several extremely long shots, and that film critics have defined this to be an important feature of slow cinema. There was also discussion of whether a connection can be established between the narrative importance of the shot and its length, and whether these results can be used in seeking a new definition of parametric narration in cinema.

David Bordwell, in his watershed book *Narration in the Fiction Film* 1985, listed this mode of narration among others, and it is a common understanding that the parametric mode of narration prevails in slow cinema. David Bordwell, in speaking about parametric narration wrote that:

> [..] there exists another sort of narration, one in which the film´s stylistic system creates patterns distinct from the demands of the syuzhet system. Film style may be organized and emphasized to a degree that makes it at least equal in importance to syuzhet patterns.[587]

In beginning of this project the question arose of whether this is not just a sweeping generalization – that slow cinema is always accompanied by parametricity – and thus the need to reassess this issue. In the course of analysing narrative structures in slow cinema, it turned out that in the case of *The Turin Horse* we can clearly address parametric narrative, whereas in the case of *Fallen* only a weak case of parametric narration can be found.

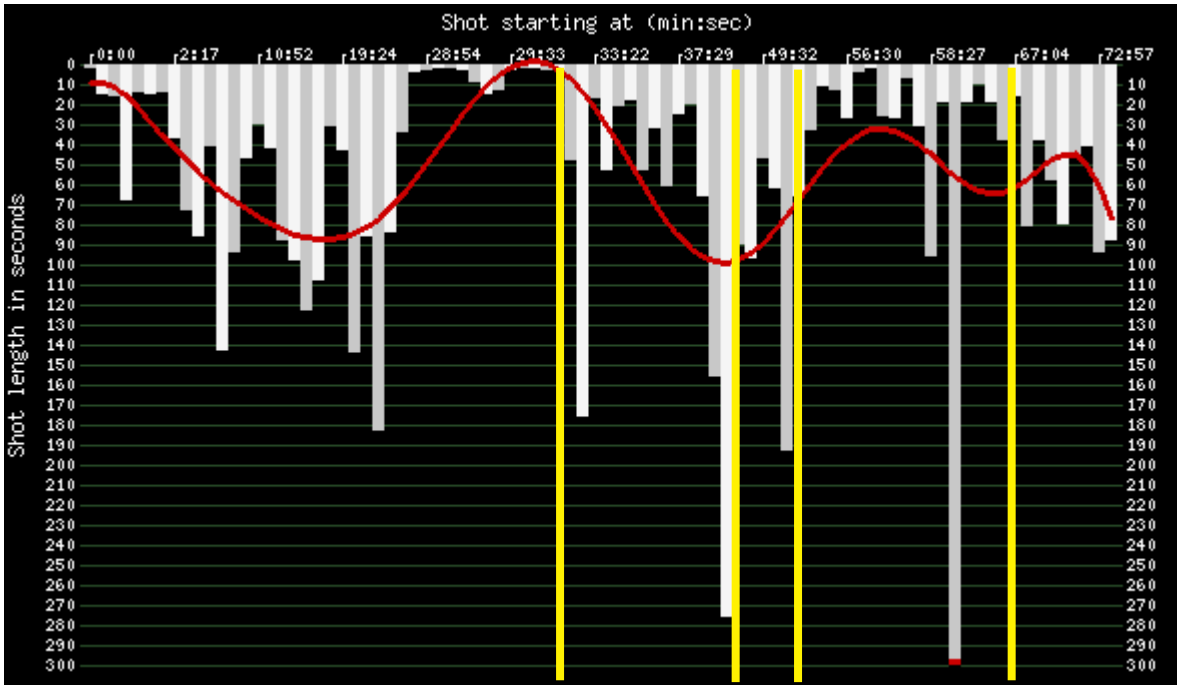
The suggestion herein is that with the help of Cinemetrics data it could be possible to obtain not only a more detailed definition of the parametric mode of narration, but also some corespondencies between the ASL and the development of the act scheme. Usually the length of the shot depends on its scale and on the narrative content. The thesis here is that for parametric narration in slow cinema this interdependence breaks down and can be demonstrated through Cinemetrics.

Furthermore, can the physical appearance of a film's statistical data suggest that we are dealing with a slow cinema example?

587 David Bordwell *Narration in the Fiction Film*, Madison, 1985, p. 275.

1. Film example: Goodbye, Dragon Inn (dir. Tsai Ming-Liang, 2003)[588]

(Technical data of the image: vertical resolution 1 pixel/sec, high 300 pix, degree of the trendline 12. The yellow lines in the graph mark the divisions between the film´s narrative segments.) [589]



The ASL of the film lies at 53 sec, the median shot length is 34.6 sec, standard deviation is 58.7.

This list of the core data of Cinemetrics not only needs to be explained, but also discloses some of the key problems of Cinemetrics. As mentioned, the ASL is notional data obtained with the help of a mathematical process. In contrast, the median is derived from the actual shot length values of a film. When the data is arranged from shortest to longest shot, it is the one in the middle. The Cinemetrics site contains a huge discussion between the Cinemetrics practitioners about the issue of whether the ASL or the median should be the preferred reference parameter.[590] Mike Baxter, in his entry to the site, explains it as a compromise solution in that we actually have to use both parameters, because "Both are needed to make the picture bifocal."[591] Each parameter tells us another story. What strikes me about the data from *Goodbye, Dragon Inn* is the difference between the ASL and the median. Namely, the former is almost twice as large as the latter.

At this point it is important to note that, in contrast to the bar charts usually used in statistics,

588 Measured by Elīna Reitere, entry of the film at Cinemetrics, http://www.cinemetrics.lv/movie.php?movie_ID=8388 (Accessed 12. 06.2013).

589 In order to obtain comparable graphs I have chosen the same degree of vertical resolution and the same degree of the trendline for all my film examples, although this can create quite an erratic trendline. Only the highs of the graph can differ depending on whether the shots in the film are shorter than 300 pix or longer (then the graph has 500 pix).

590 For the different positions on this issue visit the chapter *Films and Statistics: Give and Take*, available at http://www.cinemetrics.lv/dev/on_statistics.php (Accessed 25.04.2013).

591 Yuri Tsivian *What Do Lines Tell?* Available at http://www.cinemetrics.lv/dev/on_statistics.php (Accessed 25.04.2013).

the Cinemetrics graphs are inverted. Yuri Tsivian explains as follows:

> (..) when we launched the Cinemetrics site, peaks and valleys is what interested us in the first place; we even reversed the usual Y-axis of shot lengths upside down for our graphs to dovetail with the time-honored tradition to represent the climax as an apex, not as an abyss.[592]

It is very important to explain that three of the peaks in the trendline (at the very beginning of the film and around the 29th and 57th minutes) of *Goodbye, Dragon Inn* coincide narratively with the three episodes of the film, when we see the film *Dragon Inn* (1967, dir. King Hu) projected onscreen and cross-cut with the close-ups of the cashier. So, if the creators of Cinemetrics predicted that when we usually see a peak in the trendline we can conclude that there is some kind of a climax in the narrative construction of the film, then this is the first very obvious proof that this thesis does not always hold true. But this train of thought encourages us to take the Cinemetrics graph as a template and compare it with the results obtained in the previous chapter about the narrative construction of the films. James Cutting and his colleagues have carried out similar research whereby they analysed the physical structure of Hollywood films from 1935 to 2005 in respect to the four-act-structure developed by Kristin Thompson. The research paper *How Act Structure Sculpts Shot Lengths and Shot Transitions* by James Cutting and his colleagues that serves as the point of reference here, has to be approached very carefully because he divided the films according to the four-act model automatically without taking into account the plot development of each film. That is the huge difference between his analysis and the analysis herein, because in the part of the present study dedicated to the analysis of the case examples, the plot development of the films in question was closely examined.

To recapitulate: the thesis herein is that the narrative of *Goodbye, Dragon Inn* can be divided in five unequal parts. The setup of the film, according to Cinemetrics, runs for the first 30 minutes of the film.[593] It is followed by a complicating action (minutes 30 - 46), development (minutes 46 - 54), and climax (minutes 54 - 66). The final part of the film – the epilogue – starts at the 68th minute and lasts until the 76th minute of the film. This overall structure already demonstrates a discrepancy from Thompson's four-act-scheme. Namely, she does not regard the epilogue as a separate act – she counts it as a part of the climax. As the narrative analysis of the film in the previous chapter demonstrated, in slow cinema the epilogue tends to take on a more prominent role. It often is not short – it can even be quite prolonged. Additionally, the epilogue mostly contains another narrative motif as the climax, thus differentiating itself

592 *Films and Statistics: Give and Take available* http://www.cinemetrics.lv/dev/on_statistics.php (Accessed 25.04.2013).

593 One important note has to be made here: namely, there are minor differences between the length of the film on DVD and the measurements of the film in the Cinemetrics database. This difference comes about because in the narrative analysis of the film I take into account the whole duration of the film, but for Cinemetrics, according to the tradition of the database, the credit sequences without scenic content are not measured.

distinctly from the previous act.

As we can conclude from the graph of *Goodbye, Dragon Inn*, the film's setup begins with some very short shots that gradually become longer and form the first "valley" of the film. Towards the end of the setup the shots tend to be shorter again. This development constitutes a counter-example to the Hollywood tradition, where, according to James Cutting et al., the setup starts with lengthy establishing shots.[594]

What I found important and what represents a dimension of novelty in this research project is the connection between the shot length analysis and their narrative content. Of interest here are the longest shots in the particular act and the stories they contain, because in all the descriptions of slow cinema the authors highlight the long shot as a regular feature. As throughout the narrative analysis several very long shots attracted this study's attention, the statistical style analysis helps to approach this issue more rigorously.

So, in the setup of *Goodbye, Dragon Inn*, the longest shot (182 sec) shows several men urinating in the cinema's lavatory. This action in itself has no importance for plot development, but this sequence adds to establishing a particular atmosphere. The next shot, also quite lengthy (82.6 sec), depicts the cashier walking through the cinema. What's more – the last fifteen seconds of the shot show an empty scene. Thus, it seems that we cannot establish direct links between the shot length and the turning points of the plot in this film. Instead, long shots where from the narrative point of view "nothing happens", lead to a rethinking of the definition of parametric mode. David Bordwell, who coined the term, used it for films where the style of the film developed a life on its own. It seems that the method of Cinemetrics, in helping to gain a deeper insight between the shot lengths and their narrative content, can also deliver new evidence for the parametric narrative.

The complicating action represents a classical example of an act as stated by James Cutting. His statement: "an act often begins or ends with longer shots."[595] (After a remark by Barry Salt, James Cutting et. al. revised their results and discarded some sections.[596] One also cannot adhere to the thesis that longer shots are found at the breaks of the acts. As an additional analysis has shown, this claim holds true only for the climax. Although Cutting revised his views, his first opinion will be referred to for heuristic purposes because it helps to interpret the data herein. In any case, the conclusion will again reference the changes in Cutting's thesis.)

In *Goodbye, Dragon Inn* the complicating action starts at the 30 minute mark and lasts until the 46th minute. As we see from the graph, at the beginning of the complicating action there is a long shot that is 174.5 seconds long, and at the end of the act there is one 274.9 seconds in length. These two shots frame the act that consists of comparably shorter shots. Here then a statement in anticipation of the conclusion of the film - such correspondence with the physical

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594 James E. Cutting, Kaitlin L. Brunick, Jordan E. Delong *How Act Structure Sculpts Shot Lengths and Shot Transitions* in *Projections* Vol. 5, Nr 1, 2011, p. 8.

595 Ibid.p. 8.

596 James E. Cutting, Kaitlin L. Brunick, Jordan E. Delong *On Shot Lengths and Film Acts: A Revised View* in *Projections* Vol. 6, Nr. 1, 2012, pp. 142 – 145.

structure of the average popular film are comparably rare in slow cinema.

The two longest shots of the complicating action depict how the cashier descends the stairs (shot nr. 42, 174.5 sec) and the episode where the Japanese tourist talks with another patron about ghosts in the theatre (shot nr. 54, 274.9 sec). Whereas shot nr. 42 does not seem to be important narratively, shot nr. 54 represents the first dialogue of the film and delivers a possible explanation for what is going on in the old cinema.

The development act consists mostly of mid-length shots, in comparison to the ASL of the film. Additionally, four out of five shots are quite similar in length, but this can be explained by the fact that all the shots of this act serve to build up one particular episode in the film's narrative. The final shot of the part is the longest one – 192.2 sec – and it depicts the scene when the terrified Japanese tourist leaves the cinema auditorium. This lengthy shot, as it became clear in the narrative analysis of the film in the previous chapter, is a very important one, because the storyline of the old cinema as a meeting place for homosexuals comes to an end with this shot.

From the point of view of shot lengths, the climax is the most unbalanced part of the film. Namely, here one extremely long 322 second shot is contrasted with shots that are relatively short (6, 9, 18, 26 seconds) for a film with a slow narration. Therefore, the trendline here forms a small peak.

James Cutting discovered that in standard Hollywood productions shots would become slightly shorter towards the middle of the act.[597] (As mentioned above, Cutting corrected this view later on – the thesis that the shots tend to be shorter towards the middle of the act holds true only for the climax section.[598] For heuristic reasons however, the first version of Cutting's paper will be referred to.) In the case of *Goodbye, Dragon Inn*, we can observe such a tendency in the complicating action, the development and the climax.

The epilogue seems to be quite balanced consisting of shots of similar length (between 36 and 93 seconds), so that the trendline, although forming a small peak, descends again. In any case, no matter how the shot length in this film develops, the physical appearance of the epilogue differs completely from the other acts of the film, so that the physical image of the shot lengths support the hypothesis developed in the chapter about narrative – that in slow cinema the epilogue has to be regarded as separate and on its own right.

Finally, it should be stressed that the extraordinary long shots in this film, if compared with one another apart from the overall shot-length pattern, tend to get longer and longer throughout the film. This creates the impression that the film slows down over its course. If we compare the longest shots of the film with their narrative content, we cannot detect any correspondences. It seems that there is no hierarchy between the length of the shot and its narrative importance in this example. Thus, the artistic choices made by the director seem totally arbitrary. Or, that

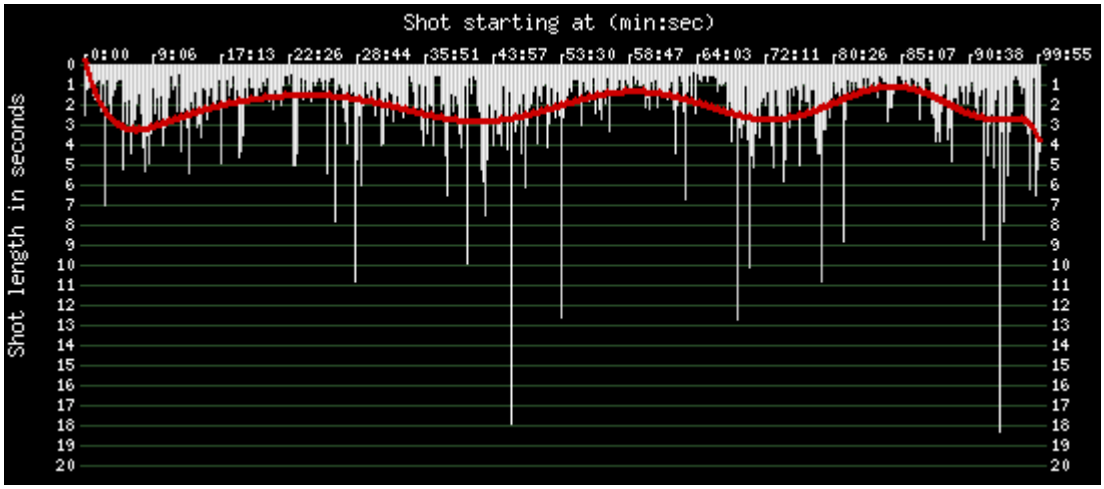
597 James E. Cutting, Kaitlin L. Brunick, Jordan E. Delong *How Act Structure Sculpts Shot Lengths and Shot Transitions* in *Projections* Vol. 5, Nr. 1, 2011, p. 10.

598 James E. Cutting, Kaitlin L. Brunick, Jordan E. Delong *On Shot Lengths and Film Acts: A Revised View* in *Projections* Vol. 6, Nr. 1, 2012, pp. 142 - 145.

the visual style in this film acquires a right on its own. It is therefore tempting to mark this film as a case of parametric narrative, but a very important distinction between art cinema and its parametric mode must be stressed. Namely, if in the case of art cinema the artistic choices made by the filmmakers may seem totally arbitrary, then in the case of parametricity, a rigorous stylistic pattern can be made out.[599] Frankly, this is the point in Bordwell's definition of parametric mode that makes the detection of such films so hard, because it not only demands a very attentive viewer, but also can be a quite subjective procedure as the identification of artistic parameters also relies on the viewer's interpretative capacity.

In any case, with the help of Cinemetrics we can observe the relationship between a film's longest shots and its narrative content, as analysed in the previous chapter of this dissertation, and the duration as such becomes a kind of an attraction in slow cinema. For example, the 321.8 seconds long shot in the climax is the shot of the empty cinema, which, from the narrative point of view constitutes the peak of the story, although in traditional narrative terms "nothing happens" in this shot. The shot shows only an empty cinema hall with no viewers, and thus the cinema is condemned to be closed down. Here we encounter a situation possible only in slow cinema – that an empty shot can still carry important narrative information. This fact highlights the difficulty in distinguishing important from less important scenes in slow films.

In order to visualize the difference between the shot-length diagram of a slow cinema film and an ordinary mainstream production, the film *The Bourne Ultimatum* (2007) from the Cinemetrics database can be noted.

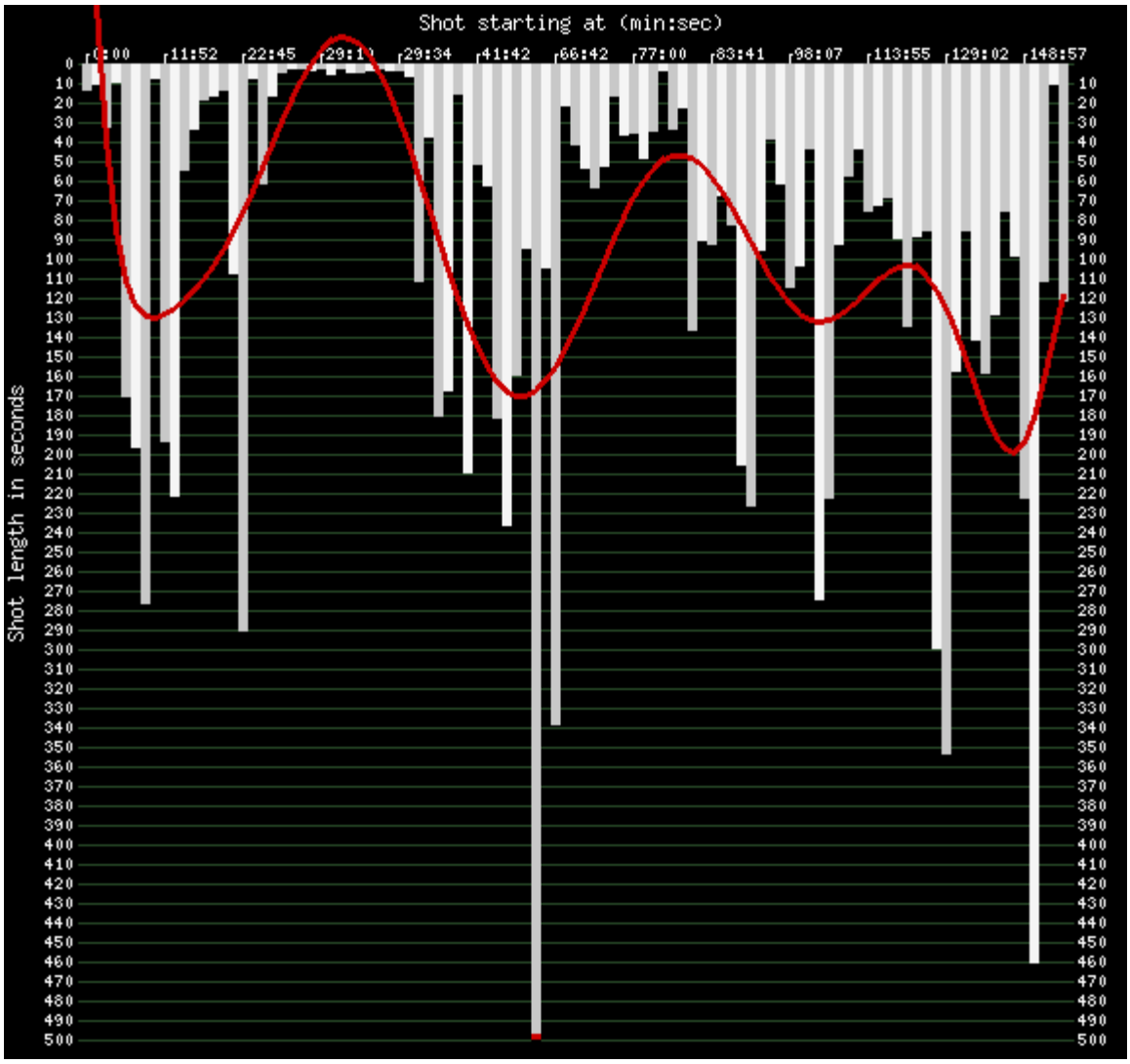


It has an ASL of 2.1 seconds, unthinkable for slow cinema, and the range of the shots – the difference between the shortest and longest take – lies at 18.9 seconds.[600] Using the same

599 Matthew Flanagan Slow Cinema: Temporality and Style in Contemporary Art and Experimental Cinema, 2012, University of Exeter, p. 134, available at https://ore.exeter.ac.uk/repository/handle/10036/4432 (Accessed May 2013).

600 Diagram of *The Bourne Ultimatum*, measured by Adrian Tomas Samit at Cinemetrics: http://www.cinemetrics.lv/movie.php?movie_ID=10653 (vertical resolution - 10 pixels, height 200 pixels, degree of the trendline – 12) (Accessed 12.04.2013).

degree of the trendline, we get a much smoother trendline that emphasizes the fact that we are dealing with shots that do not differ as extremely in length as in slow cinema. Surely it would be tempting if it were possible to detect slow cinema from a glance at the film's Cinemetrics graph. But this is absolutely not the case. The results of the statistical style analysis of slow cinema films show similar features to the films mentioned as predecessors of the slow cinema movement, for example the film *Ulysses Gaze* by Theo Angelopolous.[601] It has an ASL of 97.6 seconds and a range of shot-lengths of 611.2 sec, which comes close to the values of a slow cinema film.



Ulysses Gaze, 1995

From this first example it seems obvious that the statistical style analysis supports the obvious truth that slow cinema constitutes a counterpart to Hollywood mainstream cinema. James Cutting concludes in his article that the patterns of four acts, supported by his physical

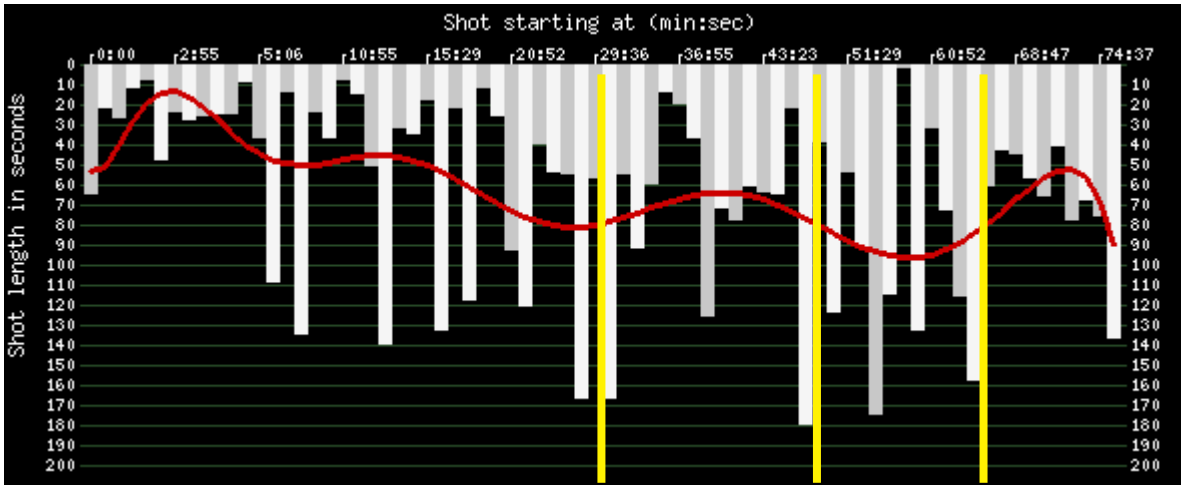
601 Site of the film (measured by Adrian Tomas Samit) at Cinemetrics http://www.cinemetrics.lv/movie.php?movie_ID=10591 (vertical resolution - 1 pixel, height 500 pixels, degree of the trendline – 12) (Accessed 12.04.2013).

analysis of statistical data, serve to guide the viewer's "expectations about a film and its narrative progress."[602] Although in discovering that in their shot structure slow cinema films differ completely from the average film, we cannot conclude that this feature would surprise audiences. Because, as was stated in the introductory chapters of this thesis, these films are made for cinema-educated audiences familiar with the narrative norms of art-house cinema, and that you often have to depart from your expectations and be ready to engage with the unexpected.

602 James E. Cutting, Kaitlin L. Brunick, Jordan E. Delong *How Act Structure Sculpts Shot Lengths and Shot Transitions* in *Projections* Vol. 5, Nr. 1, 2011, p. 10.

2. Liverpool (dir. Lisandro Alonso, 2008)[603]

(Vertical resolution 1 pixel, height 200 pixels, degree of the trendline – 12)
ASL 63.3; Median 53.4, standard deviation 46.7.



To recapitulate: the setup of the film lasts for 30 minutes, and there is no complicating action in the film. Instead, development begins right after the setup and lasts for 18 min. The following parts have the following lengths – the climax lasts for 19 minutes, the epilogue – 11 minutes.
Liverpool opens with a more than minute-long shot showing men playing computer games. As James Cutting discovered, in standard Hollywood productions the setup starts with lengthy establishing shots. Although for the next five minutes the shots are quite short, it seems that slow cinema filmmakers understand the first shot of the film to be the style-defining element, so that it has to deliver the aesthetic signature of the director. Therefore, the first shot is usually a longer one. But, there is one important difference between slow cinema and a mainstream production. Namely, while in the latter the first lengthy establishing shots contain very important narrative information, in the case of slow cinema, as we see in *Liverpool*, such shots are more important as style markers than providers of narrative information.
In the subsequent minutes of the setup (minutes 1 - 30), shorter shots dominate, but within the development the length of the shots increases. Expressed more accurately, longer shots tend to become longer during the course of the setup. The two longest shots of this part appear at the end of the setup, corresponding with James Cutting's discovery that the longest shots can be observed near the breaks of the parts.
In the development (minutes 30 - 48), we encounter the same tendency – the longest shot of the part comes towards the end (in its 45th minute). After this 178.9 second long shot, which takes place in a canteen of the village, the climax begins (minutes 48 - 67) – the appearance of the shots clearly standing out. Although the duration of the longer shots continuously extend throughout the running time, the cutting pattern in this part demonstrates comparably long

603 Measured by Elīna Reitere, the film's entry into Cinemetrics available at: http://www.cinemetrics.lv/movie.php?movie_ID=12519 (Accessed 15.04.2013).

shots that results in a clear-cut "valley" in the trendline. So this is the slowest part of the film that correlates with the narrative content of the climax. In this part Farrel visits his ill mother – these episodes have a sad, nostalgic overtone, and as such long shots are the best-suited counterpart to the narrative content in terms of stylistics. Here we find proof for Barry Salt's claim that "the treatment of scenes in terms of the cutting rate or the ASL varies depending on the nature of the action in them."[604]

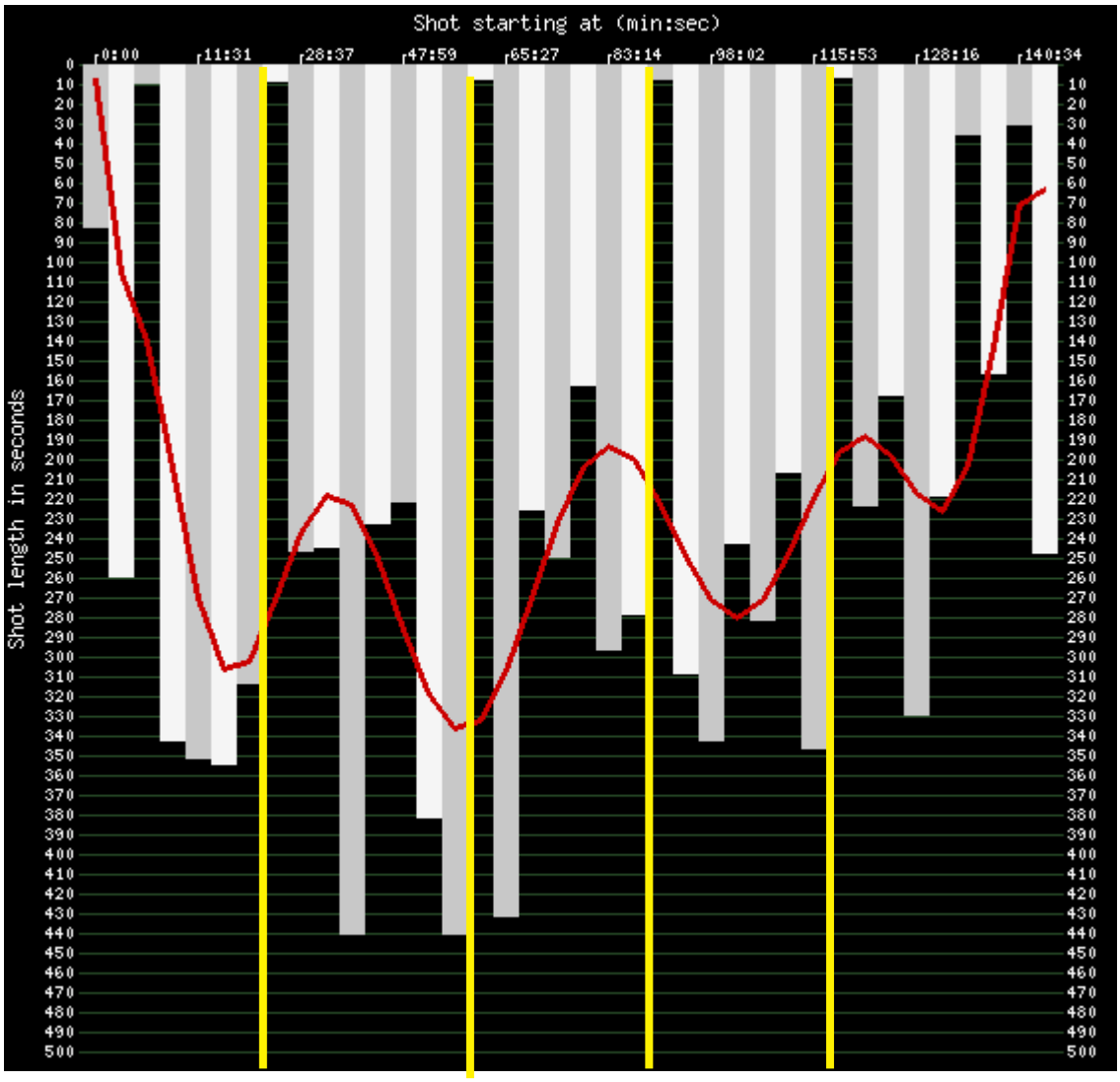
As in the parts before the climax, this part too ends with an outstanding long shot, showing Farrel leaving the village. Then the epilogue begins (minutes 67 - 78), which in its editing pattern once again clearly differs from the previous parts. Namely, with the exception of the last shot, here the shot lengths are roughly balanced with a slight tendency of becoming longer. But there are no extremes as in the previous parts. As could be felt during viewing, the epilogue has a very different editing pattern than the rest of the film and a proof for that can be found through statistical style analysis. Even more, if in the chapter on the narrative analysis of slow cinema the division of film parts might have looked arbitrary, then the analysis of the cinemetrical data of the films demonstrate consistencies in the editing patterns of particular narrative parts. In doing so, they support not only the chosen division of the films into plot units, but also confirm the thesis herein that slow cinema films consist of unequal parts.

The final observation on the statistical data of *Liverpool* is the fact that, comparably, in the part of the film that takes place in the town (the setup), the shots are shorter than in the second part of the film that takes place in the countryside. One might say – the fast pace of city-life is consistent with the faster cutting, whereas the slower pace of rural life is depicted in longer shots. This analogy between the shot content and shot length serves as a proof that the stylistic choices are funded in the narrative. But this is not a surprising conclusion. In comparison, in the analysis of the film *Goodbye, Dragon Inn*, it seemed that the longest shots develop a separate life and are not funded in narrative, so that in any case we can speak of art cinema, if not parametricity. The opinion of this thesis is that *Liverpool* is an example of slow cinema, though we cannot automatically name the style of the film parametric only because the film has extensively long shots. In this film, as mentioned, the length of the takes is less incidental. Thus, such examples invite us to approach the issue of parametric film style more cautiously.

604 Barry Salt *Getting a Result*, 2013, available at Cinemetrics http://www.cinemetrics.lv/dev/on_statistics.php (Accessed 25.04.2013).

3. The Turin Horse (dir. Bela Tarr, 2011)[605]

Vertical resolution 1 pixel, height 500 pixels, degree of the trendline – 12.
ASL 229.2; Median 245.2, standard deviation 127.5.



Quite unusually for a slow film, the first shot of *The Turin Horse* does not reveal anything about the film's style. Namely, it is a black shot with only the narrator's voice telling the story. Only the second shot of the film, which depicts the old man with his carriage on the way back home lasting for 259 seconds, discloses the stylistic approach of the filmmaker. Curiously enough, even in terms of art cinema this is a very extended shot, but compared to the rest of the film it is only average (not counting the inter-titles) with the ASL of the whole film being 229.2 seconds with a median of 245.2 seconds.

Shots nr. 3, 8, 16, 23, 30, 37 are black inter-titles introducing the number of the particular day, so they do not belong to the plot. These shots not only announce the day, but they also serve as the breaks between the narrative acts of the film (with the exceptions of the shots

605 Site of the film at Cinemetrics available at http://www.cinemetrics.lv/movie.php?movie_ID=9760 (Accessed 26.04.2013); in this the measurements of the film by Adrian Tomas Samit were used.

nr. 3 and 37). As these shots are of a duration of little more than 6 seconds, they form outliers if compared to the rest of the shots in the film, which usually last for 220 seconds and much more. Thus, they disturb the statistical analysis of the film because the ASL presents a statistical mean between the long and the short shots. It seems that in case of *The Turin Horse*, it would be better suited to rely on the median value of the film.

As stated earlier, the setup of *The Turin Horse* lasts until the 28th minute of the film. In the film *Fallen*, which also has very extended shots and whose director Fred Kelemen also was the cameraman on *The Turin Horse*, the longest shots of the particular act disclose the most relevant plot information. But in *The Turin Horse* this does not seem to be the case. The longest shots in the setup are shots nr. 4 (father and daughter put the horse and the carriage into the stable), nr. 5 (daughter helps father remove his clothes), and nr. 6 (they eat dinner). None of these shots can be classified in narrative terms as more important. All seem to have the same narrative importance. They also have almost the same duration. Thus, in the setup of the film it is not possible to make out a narrative hierarchy of the takes. But it is important to note that all these takes demonstrate virtuous camera movements, which are used regardless of plot development. Consequently we can regard the camera movement as a parameter of this particular mode of narration.

The complicating action sets in with the 28th minute and goes on until the 65th minute, that is to say, it encompasses the second day of the action. There are three shots in this act that stick out in respect to their duration. These are the shots nr. 11 (in the morning, the daughter pours water from the bowl), nr. 14 (the daughter pours water from the bowl after having done the laundry), and nr. 15 (the neighbour's visit). What unites the three shots is very extensive camera movements throughout the takes, but this is also the case in takes with less extended duration. From a narrative point of view, shots nr.11 and nr. 14 do not reveal any important story information – they just illustrate the everyday routine on the farm. In comparison, shot nr. 15 is quite ambiguous. As stated in the narrative analysis of the film, this episode with the neighbour who comes to borrow some brandy is actually a false turning point – in narrative terms it leads to nothing. It just serves to renew the viewer's interest in the story. Interestingly enough, this longest take of the act is situated at the end of the part.

The fact that shots nr. 11 and nr. 14, not containing any important narrative information, are paired with virtuous camera movements can be interpreted as a proof for the parametric mode of this particular film. Namely, in shots where the narrative gain of the shot is very low but the staging staggers the audience, we encounter takes with a purely decorative function as is usual in the parametric mode.

Development I starts at the 65th minute and lasts until the 92nd minute. It describes the events of the third day. The longest shot of the act is the opening take. It shows the daughter in the morning on her way to the well. This shot (nr. 17) lasts for 430.9 seconds. Shot nr. 21, which depicts the gypsies arriving at the farm and which is narratively a more important shot,

is considerably shorter (only 295.6 seconds). Thus here we encounter another shot which through its extended length has a purely decorative function.

Development II takes place from the 92nd minute until the 121st minute of the film; this act consists of six shots. All are of a considerable duration between 206.3 and 345.6 seconds, but the three longest ones are nr. 24 (daughter goes to the well in the morning and discovers that it is empty), nr. 25 (father and daughter visit their horse), and nr. 29 (father and daughter unload the carriage after their return). If we compare the length of these shots with their narrative content, then only shot nr. 24 can be regarded as having a turning point. Namely, the drying-out of the well is the last incident in the chain of events that forces the father to reach the decision to leave their homestead. Both other prolonged shots depict activities that do not propel the story. Thus, as in the previous acts of *The Turin Horse*, such takes serve the need for décor, and in doing so the parametric mode of the narrative comes into being.

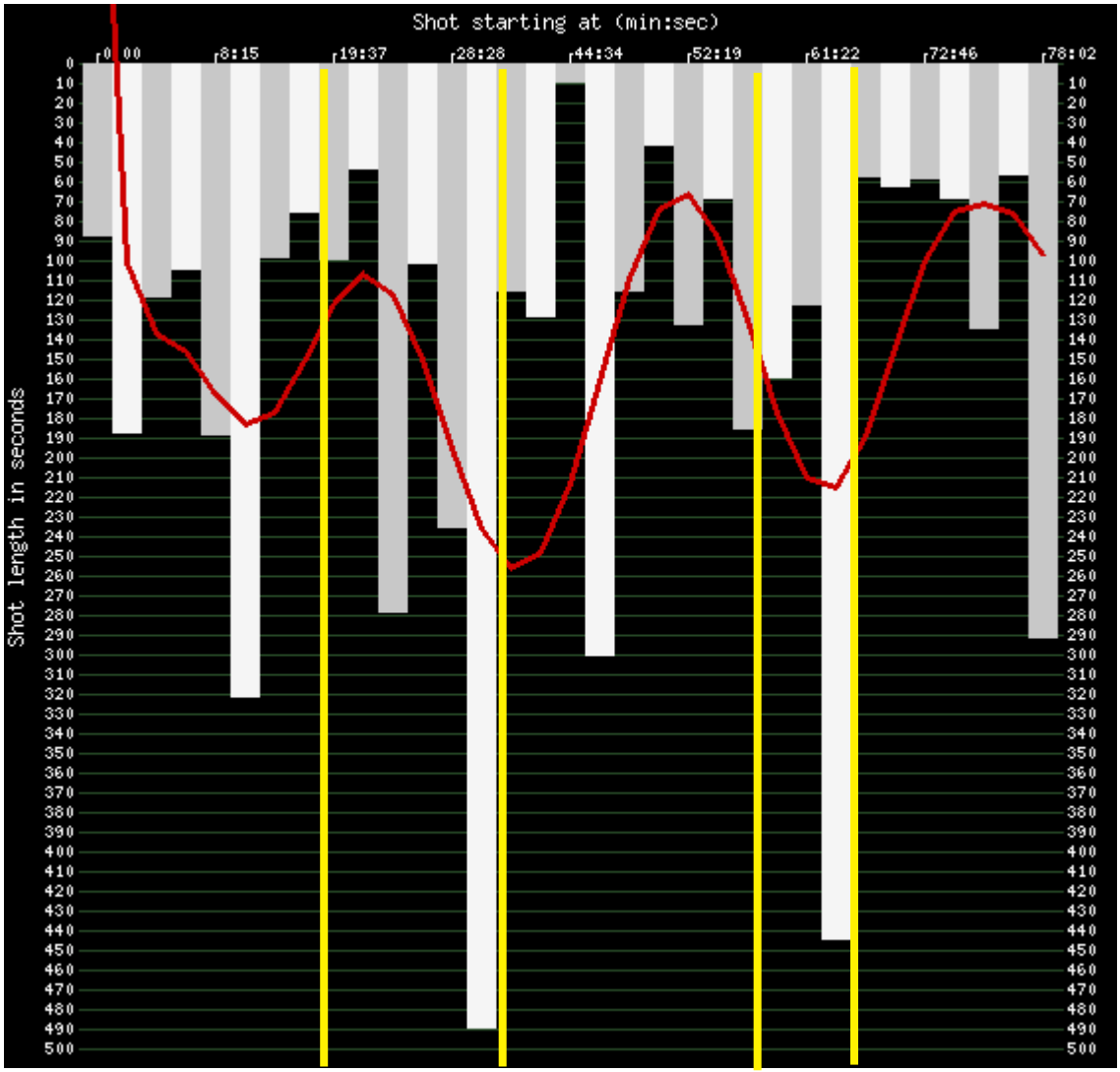
Curiously enough shot nr. 28, which depicts a vast landscape and the family carriage at first leaving the shot, but after some seconds coming back home, is the shortest shot of the act – just 206.3 seconds. Such shots with characters departing beyond the horizon and then coming back without a cut to the next shot have become standard in art-house cinema during the last years. One might be tempted to say that this short shot with such decisive action serves as proof that in *The Turin Horse*, like in a standard Hollywood film, the most important action is depicted in the shortest shots. But such a conclusion would be totally misleading because in the case of this comparably short shot we are still dealing with shots with an exceptionally long duration in comparison to the ASL of a modern-day, traditional Hollywood film. This will be the subject of the subchapter about *Blissfully Yours*.

The climax of the film starts in its 121st minute and lasts until the end of the film, containing also a very short epilogue consisting of one 246.5 second shot. As the trendline shows, this is comparably the fastest act of the film.

All in all, *The Turin Horse*, which sticks out from the slow cinema examples herein with their very long shots, is a very special case. It is not only the slowest film of these slow cinema examples, but also, as shown above, it is the truest example of the parametric mode of narrative. This can be proven by uniting the narrative analysis of the shots with the results obtained from the statistical style analysis.

4. Fallen (dir. Fred Kelemen, 2005)[606]

Vertical resolution 1 pixel, height 500 pixels, degree of the trendline – 12.
ASL 150.7, median 114.6, standard deviation 112.



The first shot shows the place where the first episode takes place (a bridge over a river), but actually contains the opening credits of the film. It is at any rate included in the statistical analysis of the film. But in this case we cannot regard its length as an artistic statement of the director, because it lasts only as long as the opening credits. So the first shot of the film, which sets the artistic agenda of the director's signature, is actually the second shot, which with its duration of 186.5 seconds already predicts the overall pace of the film. It is above the ASL of the film of 150.7 seconds so, similarly to the previous examples, the first shot of the film is a stylistic declaration and also the first endurance test for the audience.

The setup lasts for 19 minutes and consists of 8 shots. The longest shot is in the middle, and

606 Measured by Elīna Reitere, the film's entry into Cinemetrics available at http://www.cinemetrics.lv/movie.php?movie_ID=12557 (Accessed 3.05.2013).

lasts for 320.8 seconds (shot nr. 6). In the second shot of the film, which is among the longest in the setup, the initial problem is set – the main character Matiss hears a woman falling into a river. In shot nr. 6 we receive all the useful information about the main character (his name etc.), but this shot also delivers a police officer's strange monologue, which is not further developed as a theme. In any case it seems that the shots with the longest duration contain the most important narrative information.

In the setup, it seems that there is a tendency for the length of the longest shots of the act to increase over the course of the part.

The complicating action lasts form the 19th to the 40th minute of the film, and here we can also observe the tendency of the shots becoming longer towards the end of the part. The longest shot of the complicating action is situated at the end. It is shot nr. 14, it lasts for 488.9 seconds and depicts the episode where Matiss reads Alina's letter, which in narrative terms is the turning point of the plot. As in the setup, the most important narrative information is disclosed within the longest shot.

The development begins in the 40th minute of the film and runs until the 58th minute. It consists of eight shots and the longest (shot nr. 18), is situated in the middle. It is a 300.3 second long take where Matiss watches the slides of Alina, her husband and her lover, which is another turning point of the film. The second longest take of the development is at the end, which we can now regard as a pattern in having the longest takes with the most relevant story information at the end of the act. In this second longest shot, which lasts for 184.6 seconds, the second meeting between Matiss and Alexei takes place, and Alexei suggests that Matiss stays out of all this.

But, as this act actually consists of long shots (as mentioned above) and very short ones (9.1 seconds; 40.7 seconds), the trendline experiences quite a harsh rise followed by a similar sudden fall.

The climax sets in at the 58th minute and ends at the 70th minute. Although it lasts for twelve minutes, it actually consists of only three shots. The explanation for this peculiarity is founded in the relationship between the shot length and the importance of the narrative information in it. Namely, the climax contains the second longest take of the film, which also forms a valley in the Cinemetrics graph of the film. Thus, as was the case in all the previous acts of this film, the most important story information is staged using an extensively long take – it is the meeting of Matiss and Alexei in a bar, where Matiss, with his indiscreet remarks, drives Alexei to commit suicide.

In this part the longest shot is situated at the break. As we can see, James Cutting's original thesis that the longest shots take place near the act breaks often holds truth in this film, but it cannot be used as a generalization for all the slow cinema examples herein.

The closing part of the film is an epilogue that again forms a separate act. In *Fallen*, the epilogue starts in the 70th minute of the film and ends in its 83rd minute. Similarly as in *Goodbye, Dragon Inn* and *Liverpool*, the epilogue has a different editing pattern than the rest of the film. From

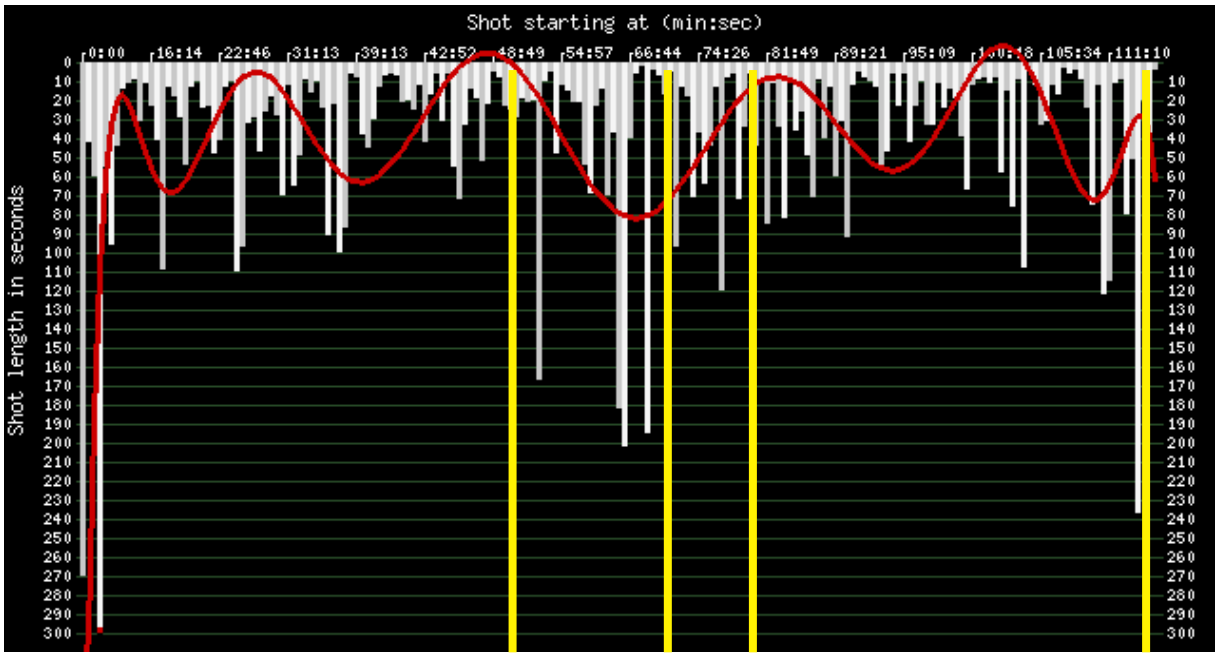
the 7 shots within this part, 5 run for about a minute each, so that this part on average is cut faster than the rest of the film. But, like in almost all the other acts of the film, the last shot of the epilogue is the longest shot of the part and contains the most important narrative information. Namely, Matiss witnesses how Alina returns to her family and that turns the whole story upside down.

The thesis here about the narrative of *Fallen* is that we can discern a parametric narration of a weak order, and the statistical style analysis delivers proof for that. In the previous chapter it was stated that we cannot speak of strong parametric narration in *Fallen* because episodes where style as décor prevails alternate with episodes where the story takes over. Now, after having analysed the film with Cinemetrics and connected these results with the narrative analysis of the film, it becomes clear that the episodes where the style prevails are the ones with the longest shot length and with the most important narrative information. Thus, the extended long takes in this particular film are not there just for styles sake, but parallel to demonstrating the director's style they reveal important story details. In comparison, shorter takes actually serve to help to establish narrative coherence between the episodes (and between extended takes). For example, the shortest shot of the film, shot nr. 17, which lasts for only 9.1 seconds, shows Matiss spying on Alexei in his yard, which serves as an explanation why both men meet again in the next episode, which takes place in the bar.

As pointed out in my narrative analysis, there is a huge difference in how the parametric mode of narration is used in *Fallen* and in *The Turin Horse* – whereas in *Fallen* we encounter only a weak mode of parametric narration, *The Turin Horse* is a shining example of this mode of art-cinema narration. It can be stated that although we encounter the most important narrative details in the longest shots and minor events in the shortest shots, we can still detect a parameter here, which is being varied. Namely, the almost stubborn use of the long shot in episodes that could be broken into shorter shots. Thus, in the case of *Fallen* we still have a parametric narration, but of a weaker order, because the plot development is partly tied to the staging.

5. Blissfully Yours (dir. Apichatpong Weerasathakul) [607]

Vertical Resolution 1 pixel, height 300 pixels, degree of the trendline – 12.
ASL 38.3; median 21.9, standard deviation 47.5.



In the previously outlined narrative organization in Apichatpong Weerasathakul's *Blissfully Yours*, the film consists of five parts: the setup (minutes 1 - 49), the complicating action (minutes 50 - 70), the development (minutes 71 - 81), the climax (minutes 82 - 119) and the epilogue (minutes 119 - 122).

As the Cinemetric's diagram demonstrates, in this film too the first shot is an extremely long one (269.1 seconds), thus declaring the artistic values of the filmmaker. But in this film, as mentioned above, an episode is made up of several shots and not just one, as it was the case in *The Turin Horse, Liverpool* and often in *Fallen*. The two longest shots of this act are situated right at the beginning of the film, and form part of the first episode of *Blissfully Yours*. With the exception of shot nr.2, which takes place on the street as Roong is catching a taxi, the other five shots visualize the episode at the hospital as Orn is trying to get a health certificate for Min. During the course of the setup, shorter shots alternate with lengthier ones. As is usual in film grammar, close-ups are mostly shorter (for example, shot nr, 20, BCU, which lasts for 12 seconds), while all the other extended shots in this part are filmed using medium long shots (nr. 15, 107.5 seconds), medium close-ups (nr. 28, 108.9 seconds), or long shots (the cluster of shots nr. 44, 90.2 seconds; nr. 46, 99.1 seconds; nr. 47, 85.8 seconds). This is the only film whose shot scale could be measured using Cinemetrics, because *Blissfully Yours* consists of static takes. Therefore, the shot scale is also mentioned here.

607 Measured by Elīna Reitere, entry of the film into Cinemetrics available at http://www.cinemetrics.lv/movie.php?movie_ID=12340 (Accessed 14.05.2013).

No preferences can be discerned in terms of the narrative content of the shots and their length. So, if the length of the first shot can be explained as the stylistic declaration of the director, then no relation between narrative importance and shot length can be made out for the other lengthy shots. For example, in shot nr. 28, which lasts for 108.9 seconds and is one of the longest in the act, we see how Orn and Min board a car, she rubs his old skin and applies a cream on his arm. This shot is not any more important than others in terms of narrative development. In comparison, shot nr. 15 (107.5 seconds), which is of similar length and sticks out of the overall pattern of the setup, depicts a narratively far more important scene – Orn explains to Sirote that the doctor didn't want to issue a health certificate for Min, and Orn expresses the wish to have another child. From the point of view of narrative construction, we receive some information in this shot that helps us to view the film's characters as multifaceted with background stories.

Another block of the longest shots in this part of the film are the above-mentioned shots nr. 44, 46 and 47. The first is Roong's talk with her boss about getting the afternoon off, which is the point in the story that opens room for Roong and Min to go to the countryside. Shot nr. 46 shows Roong getting the motorbike ready for the departure. But in shot nr. 47 we see Min talking to the security guards of the factory, without knowing what they are talking about. So, it seems that in this film we can also detect tendencies characteristic to art cinema: these are shots of a considerable length, but in their narrative content they do not disclose any important situations.

As explained in the narrative analysis of the film, the entire complicating action can be entitled "pastoral", because it depicts Min and Roong going through the jungle and having a picnic on a cliff. At the beginning of this part we find one long take, which, along with several neighbouring shots, shows the characters moving through the jungle. There are lengthy shots again at the end of the act in which we see the couple picnicking, walking and eating berries. The most important is shot nr. 100, which lasts for 193.3 seconds and reveals Min's inner dialogue about how Roong taught him Thai. The longest takes in this film can serve both purposes: on one hand they are used for visualizing important story information, and on the other hand they can simply be deployed to illustrate a certain atmosphere, as it is the case with the walk and picnic in the jungle. Thus, *Blissfully Yours* cannot be defined as purely parametric, wherein the style of the film is divorced from the narrative content of the shots.

The distribution of the lengthy shots tends to support James Cutting's original thesis that an act begins and ends with longer shots, because the longest ones are situated near the beginning and the end of the act breaks.

The development depicts the explicit scene in the jungle between Orn and her lover. What is striking from the diagram is the fact that only three different shot scales are used for the film's visual solution: the close-up, the medium close-up and the long shot. No rule can be distinguished between the length of the close-ups and long shots, but the medium close-ups tend to be longer.

The climax depicts the characters bathing in the river and snoozing afterwards. As was the case with the episode that depicted the couple's walk through the jungle, these episodes are also staged using many shots. As the shot transition is very smooth though, the proposal put forth herein is that in this case the shots seem longer than they really are. This fact helps to foster the impression that this part of the film is very slow, although the Cinemetrics' graph demonstrates several peaks and lows over the course of the act.

The longest shot of the act comes at its end. It is shot nr. 186, a close-up that lasts for 236 seconds, and shows Roong playing with Min's penis. According to film grammar, it is quite unusual that a shot like this is of such a long duration.

If we look at the entire graph, there seems to be a pattern of shot lengths in this film. Namely, it starts and ends with unusually long shots which by far extend the average shot length. Additionally, in the middle of the film we encounter comparably long shots (the complicating action "Pastoral"), which in this case seem to deliver a caesura not only in narrative terms (the complicating action as a passage from city life to the jungle), but also in terms of shot duration. As mentioned, in *Blissfully Yours* we encounter a peculiar situation wherein the viewer perceives the shots to be longer than they actually are.

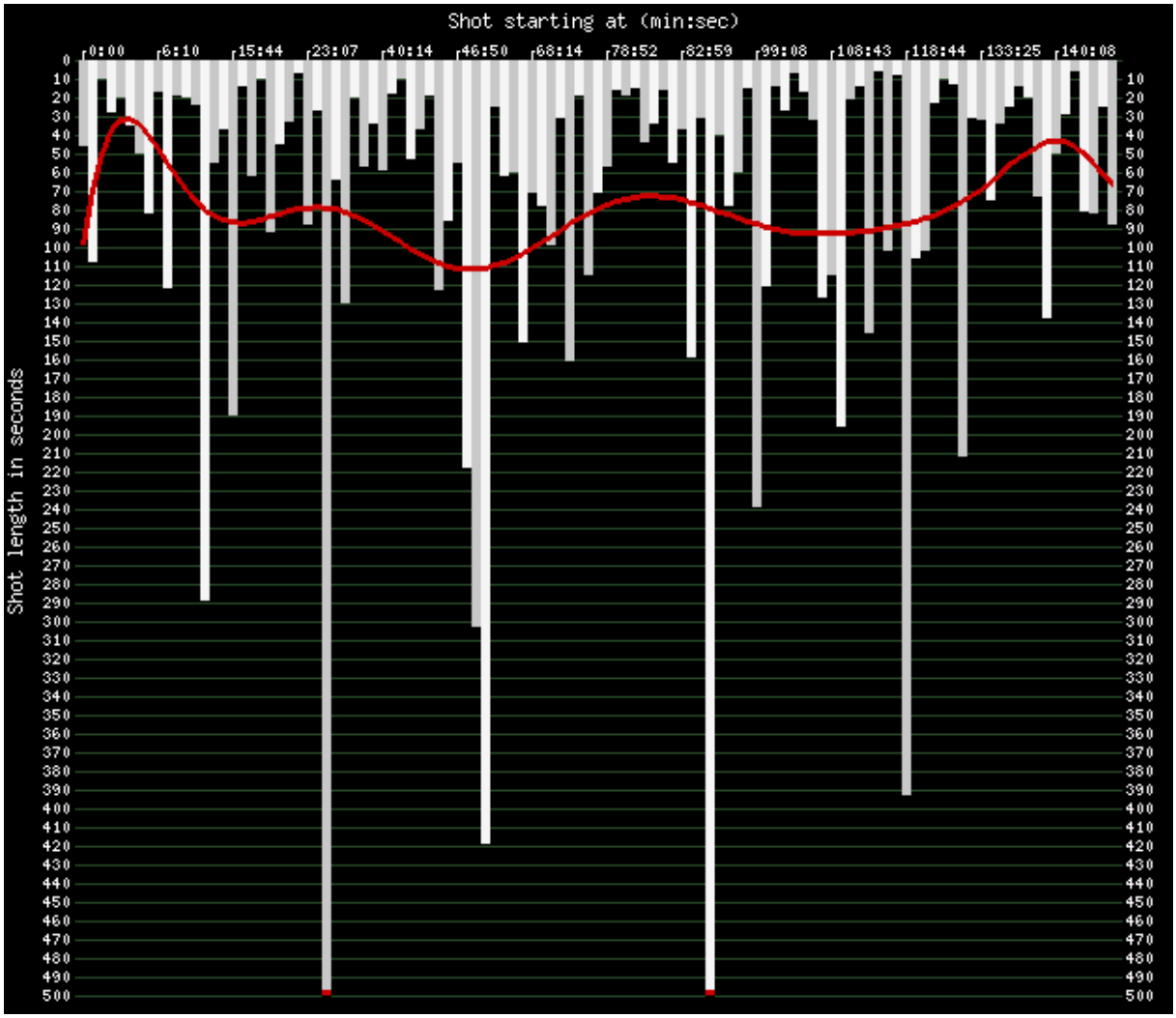
Similarly as in *Liverpool*, with a plot divided between the city and a small village, and shot lengths corresponding to fast city life vs. the peaceful pace of the countryside, such a tendency can also be made out in *Blissfully Yours*. Namely, when the narrative leaves the city behind the Cinemetrics graph shows more durational takes.

As is the case with all the other examples, the epilogue also forms a separate part, although a very short one. These three shots, similar to the other examples, differ from the rest of the film. Two of the shots can be interpreted as Roong's point-of-view shots, but the last shot shows her looking directly into the camera. For the first time in the film the camera and the narrative come close to Roong's inner life and her feelings. This epilogue could also be a beginning of a new plot line if it was not the end of the film.

As no correlation between the length of the take and its narrative content can be made out in *Blissfully Yours* – it seems totally arbitrary – this leads to the conclusion that Apichatpong's film can also be deemed an example of parametric cinema.

6. Colossal Youth (dir. Pedro Costa, 2006)[608]

Vertical resolution 1 pixel, height 500 pixels, degree of the trendline – 12.
ASL – 78.9 seconds, median – 44.7 seconds, standard deviation 101.6 .



A conclusion in the narrative analysis of the film *Colossal Youth* stated that the four-act scheme completely breaks down, and we encounter the fragmentization of the narrative into different themes. In terms of slow cinema the interest lies in the film's longest takes and their narrative content, and perhaps this can serve as a point of departure in recognizing a structural pattern in the film.

Most of the longest takes in the film are clustered in Vanda's flat (shot nr. 14, 287.5 seconds; nr. 27, 614.7 seconds; nr. 44, 435.5 seconds; nr. 68, 556.3 seconds), with the exception of shot nr. 89 (407.5 seconds), which takes place in the hospital where an ill Paulo is talking about his wishes. The scenes with Vanda are staged in very long shots, the shortest being shot nr. 85 (194.9 seconds), which, in terms of *Colossal Youth*, is among the lengthier takes of the film. Thus, the filmmaker's artistic strategy seems to depict Vanda and her stories in lingering takes.

608 Entry of the film into Cinemetrics: http://www.cinemetrics.lv/movie.php?movie_ID=7909#nogo36 (Accessed 25.05.2013). In this case, the measurement of the film done by Adrian Tomas Samit was used.

All of these long takes are long shots in their shot scale, and the shortest takes mainly illustrate Ventura's comings and goings through Fontainhas or in the new district of Casa al Boba (more often filmed using medium-length shots or less). Thus, the large-scale shots often last longer onscreen in comparison to smaller scale shots that have a shorter duration. In this respect *Colossal Youth* sticks to the traditional rules of film grammar.

The theme, which is resolved in comparably short shots, is the episode in the art museum and Ventura's story about his accident during the construction of the museum (nr. 32 - nr. 40).

The fact that several themes are depicted in a rigorous manner (Vanda, in extensively long takes, the museum episode in short takes, the long takes on a large scale, the short takes on a small scale) suggests that in *Colossal Youth* form follows function, though surely this saying cannot be understood in the same way as in a mainstream film. As mentioned in the chapter about the narrative construction of slow cinema, Pedro Costa is a political filmmaker who wants to depict Fontainhas and its inhabitants in a way best suited to its people. In Costa's opinion, this happens to be the long shot and the long take.

At the same time we still have an abundance of shots of seemingly arbitrary duration. For example, the way the filmmaker depicts the dialogue between Ventura and Lento, or Ventura's meetings with the government official, or several shots in the slum. All of these artistic decisions made by Costa can be justified with his wish to do justice to the neighbourhood, so that every shot is both a political statement and also an artistic one. In aesthetic terms Costa follows the same artistic agenda as the other slow cinema filmmakers – long shots where "nothing happens", but the background for his deeds is completely different. This issue was dealt with in the narrative analysis of the film. The results of the plot analysis acquire a more refined justification if linked to the results of the statistical style analysis. And vice versa – if the film's image in Cinemetrics resembles the other slow cinema examples with its extensively large range of 610.1 seconds, then it is only through narrative analysis, which underlines the filmmaker's signature as a political statement, that Pedro Costa's exceptional place within the contemporary cinema landscape can be clarified. With this background knowledge Costa's staging strategy is justified and does not seen to be totally arbitrary, as one might have concluded from the narrative analysis of the film. Curiously though, if in terms of structural analysis *Colossal Youth* seemed to be a highly peculiar film, then with the statistical information in mind, the film can be interpreted as a more classical example where style follows function. But, in order to arrive at this conclusion, we need both – the narrative / structural and the statistical analyses as they support each other.

Finally, it's tempting to state that it's possible to detect whether a film belongs to slow cinema or not from the physical image of the shot lengths. As mentioned above, the slow cinema graphs resemble those of other films throughout film history that have used long takes and a large shot range. But a comparison of the ASL, a parameter from the statistical style analysis that has not yet been used, between the films can possibly deliver a definite answer on how to recognize slow cinema with the help of film statistics.

7. Where does slow cinema begin?

As Barry Salt has observed, over the course of time the cutting rates in American cinema have increased. Between 1946 and 1951 the ASL averaged 9 seconds, while in 1994-1999 it reached 3 seconds.[609]

It's tempting to seek the ASL of slow cinema as well. Salt explains that for American films made after 1990, the ASL of 10 seconds is the figure with which art films start.[610] As slow cinema constitutes a branch of art cinema, it seems likely that the absolute figures of the ASL of slow cinema lie far beyond the mentioned 10 seconds. The case examples herein, if listed according to their shot lengths, look like this: *Blissfully Yours* – 38.3 seconds, *Goodbye, Dragon Inn* – 53 seconds, *Liverpool* – 63.3 seconds, *Colossal Youth* – 78.9 seconds, *Fallen* – 150.7 seconds, *The Turin Horse* – 229.2 seconds. The ASL of slow cinema examples that Matthew Flanagan, who is currently the most influential authority on questions concerning this film movement, listed as a guideline in 2008 look very similar. His examples were: Carlos Reygado's *Silent Light* (2007) with 35.1 seconds, Albert Serra's *Honor de Cavalleria* (2006) with 35.7 seconds, Gus Van Sant's *Gerry* (2002) with 65.1 seconds, Hou Hsiao-hsien's *Café Lumière* (2003) with 66.7 seconds, Paz Encina's *Hamaca Paraguaya* (2006) with 136.6 seconds, Bela Tarr's *Sátántangó* (1994) with 151.4 seconds, and Abbas Kiarostami's *Five: 5 Long Takes Dedicated to Yasujiro Ozu* (2003) with an 884.8 seconds ASL.[611] Thus, although he mentions several other filmmakers than this study does, these are still "the usual suspects" that are always connected to slow cinema.

It seems that in slow cinema we can take an ASL of 30 seconds as the dividing line, with the other end of the measurements left open. In any case, Bela Tarr stands at the far end of the list, which could be explained by his exceptional style not only in terms of art cinema, but also within the framework of slow cinema. The average shot measures for slow cinema seems to lie somewhere between 50 and 85 seconds. These considerations are supported by a more detailed look at the ASL throughout the filmographies of the filmmakers in question. For example, Apichatpong Weerasathakul mainly works with an ASL a little above 30 seconds (*Blissfully Yours*, 2002 – 38.3 seconds; *Syndromes and a Century*, 2005 – 36.6 seconds; *Uncle Bonmee Who Can Recall His Past Lives*, 2010 - 34.9 seconds), the only exception being the film *Tropical Malady* (2006) with only 16.6 seconds.[612] In comparison, Lisandro Alonso uses an average length of around 60 seconds: *La Libertad*, 2001 – 62.9 seconds; *Los Muertos*, 2004 – 65.4 seconds; *Fantasma*, 2006 – 79.3 seconds; *Liverpool*, 2008 – 63.3 seconds.

Not surprisingly, there also are filmmakers who work with varying ASLs. Tsai Ming-Liang and Hou Hsiou-Hsien are examples. Although Tsai Ming-Liang's average lengths vary considerably, he sticks to the ASLs of slow cinema that are between 30 and 85 seconds. His debut film,

609 Barry Salt *The Shape of 1999.The Stylistics of American Movies at the End of the Century* in Barry Salt *Moving Into Pictures. More on Film History, Style, and Analysis*, London, 2006, p. 332.
610Barry Salt *The Shape of 1999.The Stylistics of American Movies at the End of the Century* in Barry Salt *Moving Into Pictures. More on Film History, Style, and Analysis*, London, 2006, p. 334.
611 Matthew Flanagan *Towards an Aesthetic of Slow in Contemporary Cinema*. in *16:9*, 29, 2008, available at http://www.16-9.dk/2008-11/side11_inenglish.htm (Accessed 24.06.2013).
612 All the data was taken from the Cinemetrics database.

Rebels of the Neon God (1992) with an only 18.7 seconds ASL is an exception. His subsequent film continue like this: *Vivre l´amour*, 1994 – 36 seconds[613]; *The River*, 1997 – 52.3 seconds; *The Hole*, 1998 – 53 seconds; *What Time Is It There?,* 2001 – 60.1 seconds; *Goodbye, Dragon Inn*, 2003 – 53 seconds; *The Wayward Cloud*, 2005 – 34.6 seconds; *I Don't Want to Sleep Alone*, 2006 – 65.7 seconds; and *Face*, 2009 – 84.1 seconds.

After listing the ASL from more slow cinema films we get a bigger picture. Again, Bela Tarr's exceptional position can be underlined. Namely, his artistic strategy throughout his latest work is to use excessive ASL: *Damnation*, 1988 – 116.7 seconds; *Satantango*, 1994 – 145.7 seconds; *Werckmeister Harmonies*, 2000 – 219.4 seconds; *The Man from London*, 2007 – 248.6 seconds; and *The Turin Horse*, 2011 – 229.2 seconds.[614]

Obviously the filmmakers who, according to film critics, belong to slow cinema use this stylistic pattern steadily. But whether we are dealing with parametric cinema has to be considered on a case-by-case basis. As this chapter demonstrated, that cannot be concluded solely from statistical analysis. While Cinemetrics helps to detect the shot lengths, extensive duration alone cannot lead us to conclusions about the nature of the narrative. In the case of parametricty the crucial question is – when is a long shot just a long shot that is more characteristic to art cinema if used independently from plot needs, and when is it a systematic stylistic strategy. David Bordwell complicates the definition of parametric mode even more when he acknowledges that there are two possible parametric narrative strategies. Whereas the first one uses only a narrow range of stylistic possibilities at hand, the second strategy "exploits a wide range of paradigmatic procedures".[615] This study suggests that the conclusion, when dealing with parametricity, can only be made when the results of the narrative analysis and the Cinemetrics data are connected in a careful analysis of a film's staging as it is done in the present chapter.

At this point, one important remark has to be made. Namely, Mark Betz, who is one of the rare film scholars to touch upon the issue of parametric narrative, argues that parametric cinema is a term that has to be applied to a wide range of filmmakers and films, because it is the form in which the modernism of the 1960s and 1970s continues to influence film culture far beyond Europe.[616] The research here shows that we cannot use such sweeping conclusions. In the case of parametric cinema we have to work on a case-by-case basis.

There is another parameter detected by Cinemetrics that was briefly touched upon at the beginning of the chapter. Namely, the range of the shot lengths. This figure demonstrates the range of the shots in a film, and the striking conclusions are twofold. First of all, slow films contain very short (several second) shots as well, though the viewers only remember the very extended shots. Secondly, these ranges are similar to art films, beginning with those from the

613 With the exception of the films *Vivre l´amour* and *The Hole*, for which data was taken from David Bordwell *Figures Traced in Light: On Cinematic Staging*, Berkeley, 2005, p. 156, all the other data was obtained through Cinemetrics.

614 All the data from the Cinemetrics database.

615 David Bordwell *Narration in the Fiction Film*, 1985, p. 285.

616 Mark Betz *Beyond Europe: On Parametric Transcendence* in Rosalind Galt, Karl Schoonover (eds.) *Global Art Cinema. New Theories and Histories*, New York, 2010, p. 40, 44.

1960s. For comparison, the values of the slow cinema examples from this study are as follows: *Goodbye, Dragon Inn* – 321.1 seconds; *Liverpool* – 178.2 seconds; *Fallen* - 497.8 seconds; *The Turin Horse* – 433.7 seconds; *Blissfully Yours* – 343.5 seconds; and *Colossal Youth* – 610.1 seconds.

As usual, these figures acquire meaning only if related to counter-examples – namely, mainstream Hollywood films have a very short ASL. *The Bourne Ultimatum* (2007) has a range of shot lengths of 18.9 seconds (ASL – 2.1 seconds), but *The Bourne Supremacy* (2004) – 28.7 seconds (ASL – 2.4 seconds). Although it doesn't seem reasonable to attempt to define a shot range benchmark that would characterize slow cinema, it can be stated that the shot range will also be of a considerable size in slow cinema as both values interact with each other. It is even more useless to try to set a dividing line for the range values as they function only in connection with a large ASL. For example, the film *Moulin Rouge* (dir. Baz Luhrman, 2001) has quite a large shot range of 96.8 seconds, but its ASL reaches only 2.2 seconds![617]

Finally, the range data picture would not be complete if European art cinema data was missing. Flanagan, in his thesis *'Slow Cinema': Temporality and Style in Contemporary Art and Experimental Film,* discovered the roots of this film style in post WWII art cinema and in the experimental cinema of the 1960s.[618] Interestingly enough, the statistical values of the films of these art house filmmakers whom Flanagan cites as predecessors – Carl Theodor Dreyer, Michelangelo Antonioni and Andrei Tarkovsky[619] – look similar to slow cinema graphs. For example, *Ordet* by Dreyer (1955) has an average shot length of 65.3 seconds and a range of 424.7 seconds.[620] Antonioni's *La signora senza camelie* (1953) has an ASL of 55.6 seconds, but a range of 321.8 seconds[621] and *Sacrifice* by Tarkovsky has an ASL of 72.3 seconds and a shot range of 539.7 seconds.[622] Thus, similarities can be uncovered with the help of statistical style analysis.

8. Summary of statistical analysis

Although art cinema is understood as an expression of unique artistic vision and thus it seemed hopeless at the beginning to try to find regularities in the statistical measurements of these films, some regularities can be detected.

The first conclusion is that in slow cinema, like in the mainstream productions, the films begin with longer shots, which, in the case of slow cinema, seems to be a declaration of the

617 http://www.cinemetrics.lv/movie.php?movie_ID=9913 (Accessed 26.06.2013), measured by Charles O'Brien.
618 Michael Pattison *AV Festival: Slow Cinema Weekend, Part I – Panel Discussion* in *Front Row Reviews*, 12.03.2012 available at http://www.frontrowreviews.co.uk/film_events/av-festival-slow-cinema-weekend-part-1-panel-discussion/14998 (Accessed 26.06.2013).
619 Matthew Flanagan *'Slow Cinema': Temporality and Style in Contemporary Art and Experimental Film*, University of Exeter, 2012, p. 11, available at https://ore.exeter.ac.uk/repository/handle/10036/4432 (Accessed May 2013).
620 http://www.cinemetrics.lv/movie.php?movie_ID=8999, measured by Barry Salt (Accessed 26.06. 2013).
621 http://www.cinemetrics.lv/movie.php?movie_ID=540, measured by Yuri Tsivian (Accessed 26.06.2013).
622 http://www.cinemetrics.lv/movie.php?movie_ID=8598, measured by Mohsen Nasrin (Accessed 26.06. 2013).

filmmaker's artistic vision rather than a narrative necessity.

Secondly, although James Cutting's thesis declared that shots tend to be shorter towards the middle of the part holds true only for the climax, the examples herein tend to show the conclusion that often in slow cinema – however, not always – the longest shots can be found near the part breaks. One of the longest shots in a given part is mostly situated towards the end of the section (*Goodbye, Dragon Inn* - complicating action, development, climax; *Liverpool* – setup, development, climax; *Fallen* - complicating action, development, climax, epilogue; *Blissfully Yours* – complicating action, climax).

In the revised version of his findings, Cutting stressed that shot lengths increase at the end, likely during the epilogue.[623] This study's analysis can only confirm this fact. Thus, concerning the first and last takes of a film, both – a standard mainstream production as well as a slow film – use longer shots, although, when expressed in absolute lengths they will differ considerably.

623 James E. Cutting, Kaitlin L. Brunick, Jordan E. Delong *On Shot Lengths and Film Acts: A Revised View* in *Projections* Vol.6, Nr. 1, 2012, p. 114.

IV. Conclusion

Filmmaker Béla Tarr expressed a conviction that everything can form a story.[624] It is a peculiar declaration if we take into account that in film studies and in the minds of cinema-goers alike, there is a huge difference between mainstream cinema and the events such films choose to tell (saving the world, falling in love, uncovering crime), and those usually subsumed under the notion of strange, peculiar "cultural vegetables" such as art cinema in general or slow cinema in particular. This study set out to scrutinize the narration of slow cinema by looking at whether the four act scheme, as developed by Kristin Thompson, can be applied to the slow cinema movement that is at the lynchpin of this project.

A trigger for the preoccupation with the act structure in slow cinema contained herein were two remarks of Thompson. First of all, her speculation that the 20- to 30-minute range, which lies at heart of the act model, might correspond to the attention span of the spectator.[625] Secondly, that perception for act structures in films can be acquired over the years by the audience in accumulating cinematic experiences.[626] As this project demonstrated, the assumption that the act structure should also hold true in the case of slow cinema, turned out to be only partly correct. Namely, the introductory part in slow films (the setup) tends to be longer than usual 20-30 minutes. It can even be the longest part of all acts. Altogether, it could not be confirmed that acts have similar lengths in slow films. However, the act structure can be made out in slow cinema as well, although what differentiates this cinematic movement from the mainstream is the changed nature of the classical narrative devices. Furthermore, a character's goals are decisive for the building of a cause-and-effect chain. In slow cinema they remain unclear or change without further motivation. *Blissfully Yours*, for example, discloses a structure which is simply an alignment of episodes, but the story's forward impetus comes from the principal characters travelling across the city and to the jungle.

The unified narratives so characteristic of Hollywood are stitched together by "dangling causes" that in slow cinema often turn out to be a wrong path and thus lead to nothing. Thompson justifies the breaks between the parts with a shift in the character's goals.[627] As we discovered, in slow cinema narratives the goals stay ambiguous and thus cannot be taken as standard. Instead, the so called "turning points" may often be found within the artistic design – unusual cutting patterns, closed vs. open spaces, remarkable camera movements, visual juxtapositions, change of atmosphere etc. Hence, slow films still have an act structure, albeit one that refuses

624 Virginie Sülavy *The Turin Horse: Interview with Béla Tarr* in *Electric Sheep Magazine: a deviant View of Cinema*, 4.06.2012. available at http://www.electricsheepmagazine.co.uk/features/2012/06/04/the-turin-horse-interview-with-bela-tarr/ (Accessed 2.02. 2014).
625 Kristin Thompson *Storytelling in the New Hollywood. Understanding Classical Narrative Technique,* Cambridge, Mass., 1999, p. 43.
626 Ibid., p. 22.
627 Kristin Thompson *Storytelling in the New Hollywood. Understanding Classical Narrative Technique*, Cambridge, Mass., 1999, p. 27.

to apply the classical narrative devices. Whole parts of the film can be structured around one particular mood without containing any important narrative developments. Therefore Tarr's statement that everything can be turned into a story, if at first doubtful, could be true. And, secondly, the act scheme can be regarded as a universal narrative model that applies not only to mainstream films.

However, the assessment of the act structure in slow cinema is only a starting point for this project. For any structure yields certain effects, and the narration in any film is organized in order to produce such effects for the audience.

The guiding line came from a functionalist perspective on film narrative and the effects it generates. As Meir Sternberg stated: "there are no forms except in terms of functions, that is, when you look at the text, what you understand the text to be doing determines the forms that you see. Forms do not exist anywhere, except in the mind that makes functional sense of discourse."[628]

A film's most common function is to tell the audience a story, so that most cinema attendees await precisely this. In order to examine this process of communication – the film screening can be regarded as such – the Relevance theory, developed by Deirdre Wilson and Dan Sperber, was chosen as an approach for scrutinizing the way in which the viewer assess importance to the images presented onscreen. Although this theory has been developed in regard to everyday communication, it can very well be applied to the comprehension process of art, because in order to make sense of artworks we use the same cognitive and communicative abilities. Even more, the process of experiencing film, as Bordwell suggests, is best described as convergent inference making, where the filmmaker designs the film in a way that yields certain reactions from the viewer, and that these reactions are more or less foreseen by the filmmaker.[629] This view serves as a proof that the Relevance theory is the right approach to choose, because Wilson& Sperber also underline that the approach they developed is based on inference making as a model of communication.[630]

In assessing more and more case examples of durational cinema for the purposes of this project, the notion of weak implicatures, as developed by Wilson and Sperber, acquired increasing importance for modelling the comprehension heuristics. Whereas the author of the utterance is in charge of generating strong implicatures, the responsibility for creating weak implicatures lies completely with the viewer. The quotations and statements of the filmmakers cited throughout the film analysis about why this or that event or detail appears in the plot, demonstrated that slow cinema directors often do not have a proper explanation for what they

628 Meir Sternberg *Reconceptualizing narratology. Arguments for a Functionalist and Constructivist Approach to Narrative* in *Enthymema*, Issue IV 2011, p. 41.
629 David Bordwell *Three Dimensions of Film Narrative* in David Bordwell *Poetics of Cinema*, New York, 2008, p. 124.
630 Dan Sperber, Deidre Wilson *Relevance. Communication and Cognition*, 2ed edition, Oxford, 1995, p. ?

depict – as we can conclude from Lisandro Alonso's attitude on the reference to the sawmill or the key chain in his film *Liverpool*. Thus, in slow films we encounter a peculiar situation where the authors are responsible for the overall design of the utterance (film), without particular explanations for their artistic choices. Consequently we can conclude that slow cinema is a case of weak communication, because the communicative acts in slow cinema are dominated by weak implicatures. Even more, as concluded in the analysis of the films *Liverpool* and *Colossal Youth*, at a certain point we arrive at the limits of weak implicatures, because the filmmaker's intentions remain inaccessible to the viewer. If in *Liverpool* these were the references to the sawmill and the key chain, then in *Colossal Youth* it is the importance of the story as such. In terms of the Relevance theory, weak communication is still part of the theory, which implies that the author may have somehow foreseen or acknowledged the inferences made by the addressee. This issue seems to pose a problem even for Wilson. She acknowledges that "the relevance-theoretic comprehension heuristic is not a discovery procedure designed to take a text or utterance as input and yield an interpretation in which all ambiguities or indeterminacies are resolved in the way the intended" and further: "the communicator's informative and communicative intentions cannot be decoded, but only non-demonstratively inferred, so that comprehension necessarily takes place at a risk."[631] But she does not acknowledge that there may be a field beyond the Relevance theory.

She also turns our attention to the fact that, as the Relevance theoretic account demonstrates, communication is not a yes-no matter, but rather a matter of degree for which the differentiation between strong and weak communication is decisive. In slow films the zones of indeterminacies for which only the viewer's interpretation is vital, appear to be standard. Therefore Wilson's conviction that the author and the reader have a shared responsibility for every utterance, and that thus every utterance can be incorporated and explained in terms of the Relevance theory, at least in the case of slow cinema, is refuted. The linguist Billy Clark rightly stresses the difference between implicatures and implications. Whereas implicatures are the interpretations that the author intended to convey, mere implications are not consistent with the Principle of Relevance because they do not come from the text at all.[632] Several scenes in slow cinema may be invested with such unintended meaning, but the most impressive example is the episode from *The Turin Horse* wherein Ohlsdorfer and his daughter go beyond the horizon and then return some minutes later, but there is no evidence in the film for how this scene should be interpreted. We can therefore consider such episodes as cases of implications. And so, the film's narrative structure is decisive for the decision on what can be regarded as implicatures or implications.

631 Deirdre Wilson *Relevance and the interpretation of literary works* in Ye Tian (ed.) *Working Papers in Linguistics*, Vol. 23, 2011, London's Global University, available at http://www.ucl.ac.uk/psychlangsci/research/linguistics/publications/wpl/11papers/Wilson2011 (Accessed 20.05.2014).
632 Billy Clark *Stylistic analysis and relevance theory* in *Language and Literature*, 1996, Vol. 5, p. 170.

At the core of the argument throughout the project lies the claim that the construction of the utterance, or, in this case, of a film's plot, is magisterial for assessing relevance to it. As hoped to demonstrate, the notions of tellability as a qualitative feature for an event per se and narrativity as a qualitative property of plot organization are the concepts that shed light on this matter. The chosen case examples display a wide range of possibilities of how the relations between these two concepts can be shaped. In *Fallen* both the events surrounding the alleged suicide of Alina and Matiss' search for an explanation for her actions actually form a well-made story. From this point of view, stretches of *Fallen* can be regarded as a case of strong communication, mixed with periods of weak communication (for example, a reason for Alexei's suicide).

Goodbye, Dragon Inn, in turn, displays episodes with a low level of tellability such as the cashier's long, slow walks through the building, alternating with episodes with a wide range of weak implications to which the viewer can assess relevance according to his level of knowledge of Taiwanese film culture. The story unfolds according to the process of cinema screening, for which, as every viewer knows, there is a beginning and at some point – an end. However, as the events are not tightly stitched together, the degree of narrativity in this case tends to be lower than in *Fallen*.

The plot of *Liverpool* about a (possibly) lost son returning to his native village and to his ill mother possesses a huge tellability, however, the loose arrangement of the events combined with a minimalistic approach to staging weaken its narrativity.

The *Turin Horse* is an opposite case where the events displaying very low tellability (sitting at the window, doing laundry) are arranged along the lines of a string of days, and can thus be situated somewhere in the middle of a slow narrativity scale.

With *Blissfully Yours* we arrive at the far end of the tellability/ narrativity scale. The events depicted disclose low tellability. Even more, their narrative potential is even less exhausted than in *Liverpool*. The cause-and-effect chain, if we can detect any in this film, is very loose. As the events do not develop out of one another for the most part, but follow each another with very vague connections, the plot development resembles a magic box. Different scholars underline that the narrative schemata and thus the search for the cause-and-effect chain is the most basic activity of the audience. This study claims that the reason why film critics define Apichatpong's films – the author of *Blissfully Yours* – as (for example) "mysterious objects", is grounded precisely in this conviction that the viewer always has to find coherence between all the characters, events and plot developments in a film. But in *Blissfully Yours*, as in some other films, such an undisputable coherence among different parts isn't possible. Surprisingly, the only study to knowledge that also tries to explain off-Hollywood films from the point of view of cognition is James Peterson's *Dreams of Chaos, Visions of Order: Understanding the American*

Avant-garde Cinema. The study also insists on the importance of an interpretative schema for sense-making, for even such complicated examples as the avant-garde. He does not take any other possibilities into account, which may be explained by the state of film studies in the first part of the 1990s (when the book was written), as the importance of the sensuous film viewing experience, although verbally acknowledged, was not commonplace in the discipline. Twenty five years later, the situation is completely different as shown in the present study.

The last example, *Colossal Youth*, represents the furthest end of the scale of tellability/ narrativity. Whereas in some episodes snippets of tellable events can be found, the arrangement of the scenes is best described as polychromic narration – the position of the events in the overall temporal structure remains indeterminate.

All in all, we can conclude that slow cinema is a prime example of hybrid narrativity as proposed by the distinguished narratologist James Phelan, and that both the degree of narrativity and the degree of tellability has to be placed on a wide-range spectrum. Clearly then, Tarr's statement has to be reconsidered. Everything can form a story – even containing events with a low level of tellability – if it displays some degree of narrativity.

In terms of cinema, staging also belongs to the design of the utterance. Slow cinema is dominated by static long shots and extended takes. In some films, based on the narrative content of the shot, these takes can be best described as pre- or post-action lags, i.e., cases where the action is already over or has not yet begun, but the camera is (still) shooting. Two of the case examples discussed herein were placed within the framework of parametric cinema. Whereas *Fallen*, with a strongly-built plot connected to a staging strategy that is only divorced from its narrative content in some cases, is a case of weak parametricity, *The Turin Horse*, where style is superior to story needs, represents a strong case of parametric cinema.

As stressed again and again throughout this thesis, impressive staging design like those offered by Tarr and Kelemen are ostensive stimuli (in terms of the Relevance theory) - the viewer is encouraged to focus not only on the plot but also on the staging style, as relevance can be attested to it as well. In summary, whereas the style in slow films may display features of strong communication, we mostly encounter weak communication on story level. The conclusion additionally offers a new facet on the issue of intentional fallacy. Namely, in analysing and fully understanding the style of a particular filmmaker in terms of strong communication, there is a benefit to revisiting the author's other films. However, as the stylistic features are strongly communicated (they can be observed and understood without the need of any supplementary information) and self-sufficient, this information would only offer an additional facet.

In comparison, as the plots in slow films can be described as hybrid narratives with a strong tendency towards weak communication, one may be tempted to seek information in the filmmaker's biography in order to find coherence amongst all of the film's elements

(maximizing and optimizing strategies). But when the viewer is confronted with a slow film while in a darkened cinema with no extra-cinematic sources available, he has to find ways of coming to terms with a slow film. As explained above, Wilson stresses that all the utterances regardless of weakness still function within the framework of the Relevance theory, but Clark's objection is that implications, in contrast to implicatures, were not foreseen by the filmmaker. This thesis claims that in the case of durational cinema there are plenty of moments where the interpretations (or any reaction in general) the viewers may attribute to certain episodes cannot be foreseen and calculated by the filmmaker. Above all, it concerns the cashier's long wanderings through the cinema in *Goodbye, Dragon Inn*, or strolls through the jungle, or driving in the car in *Blissfully Yours*; the same applies to the exhausting duration of the everyday procedures depicted in *The Turin Horse* or to several of Farrel's activities in *Liverpool*. Thus, in several cases it may be best to use the term *implications*. An interpretation cannot be found for neither all of these activities nor for the exhausting duration of the shots. This led to the conditional suggestion that interpretation as a problem solving strategy in slow cinema may not be ample. Instead, it must be regarded as only one of the possibilities for an audience struggling to make sense out of the film. This thesis then posed the question of what are other strategies for coming to terms with these films if interpretation was not sufficient. For that, the suggestion was that affective, emotional and sensorial experiences acquire more and more importance. This project pondered on such strategies as the relishing of the present moment; concentration on the mood of the episodes; bodily involvement with a film such as immersion into the image and the foregrounding of its haptic qualities.

A much contested question is whether the viewer's mood and emotional reactions are always cognitively motivated and how far they are connected to and generated by the plot. Whereas David Bordwell, from the perspective of a film scholar, stresses that the comprehension and emotional reactions function reciprocally[633], Deirdre Wilson, speaking from the position of linguistic pragmatics, approaches the matter in a more refined way. She acknowledges that in some cases, such as in creating mood, the affective effects contribute to the inference-making in the communication process.[634] But, drawing on John L. Austin, she stresses that there are also a variety of perlocutionary effects like boredom, laughter, anger, shock, which do not form part of what is communicated. Instead, they are consequences of the act of communication.[635]

The hope is to have illustrated that in the case of slow cinema we definitely encounter examples where the mood of the episode is clearly connected to the plot, such as the river scene in *Blissfully Yours*. At the same time, all the long shots and entire episodes of exhausting duration

633 David Bordwell *Three dimensions of film narrative* in David Bordwell *Poetics of Cinema*, New York, 2008, p. 94.
634 Deirdre Wilson *Relevance and the interpretation of literary works* in Ye Tian (ed.) *Working Papers in Linguistics*, Vol. 23, 2011, London's Global University, p. 79., available at http://www.ucl.ac.uk/psychlangsci/research/linguistics/publications/wpl/11papers/Wilson2011 (Accessed 20.05.2014).
635 Ibid., p. 79.

where “nothing happens” certainly have an effect on the audience, regardless whether intended or not. However, as claimed throughout the project, all these perlocutionary effects form an essential part of the filmic experience, even if they are developed to such an extreme that they evoke insuperable boredom, as was the case with the film *Colossal Youth,* renamed *Colossal Bore* by some film critics. This film experience also promoted a walkout by some of the audience.

All of these modes for experiencing slow film – whether interpretation or the various possibilities for affective, emotional or sensorial exchange, can function concurrently. However, the suggestion was that each viewer, according to his constitution for different stretches of a film, will choose another dominant in order to engage with the film. Thus in *Fallen*, it could be the solving of the puzzle of Alina’s suicide along the lines of a genre film, while in *Blissfully Yours* it might be the dominance of the moody episodes that draw the viewer’s attention. But, once again, each audience member’s individual disposition has to be taken into consideration, because another viewer of *Fallen* may more be attracted to the staging of the film and thus pay more attention to the parametric qualities of the mise-en- scène rather than to the mysterious plot. A viewer of Apichatpong may be completely baffled by the fact that the film changes its course right at the middle and thus choose to leave it.

Once again, it must be underlined that interpretation is just one possibility for engaging with slow films. These “other” qualities, as indicated above, are not only “just” important in the exchange between film and viewer – they are even as important as the plot. This leads to the obvious train of thought that slow cinema can be interpreted as another form of cinema of attractions.

As Tom Gunning’s milestone concept of the cinema of attractions is well known,[636] there is no need to repeat it, but by applying this concept to slow cinema some crucial differences have to be made clear. First of all, Gunning borrows the term *attractions* from Sergei Eisenstein and understands it as an aggressive effect upon the viewer. Clearly though, in the case of slow cinema we cannot speak about aggression. Secondly, an attraction is a very short moment, but in slow cinema the basic characteristic of the attraction is its seemingly ceaseless duration. The duration itself becomes an attraction in various examples of slow cinema.
Thirdly, the cinema of attractions fosters an anti-illusionistic mode of narrative as the attractions distract the viewer from the story line. In this regard the case of slow cinema is ambiguous. Indeed, these films, like the film strips of early cinema, often lack a strong story line. But at the same time, the modus of staging in slow cinema always tries to suggest a very strong reality effect.

636 For a revised version of the cinema of attractions see Tom Gunning *The Cinema of Attractions: Early Film, its Spectator and the Avant-Garde* in Thomas Elsaesser (ed.) *Early Cinema. Space, Frame, Narrative,* London, 1990, pp. 56-63.

All in all, future consideration of whether the term *cinema of attractions* can be used only in connection to the slow cinema movement of the 21st century or whether it can be applied to all predecessors of durational cinema would be worthwhile. Thus it could best be described as a mode of representation and presentation.[637] The discussions between scholars of early cinema about the relationship between early cinema, attractions and narrativity can also shed light on the connection between the moments of attractions and the narrative events in slow cinema. All in all, Kessler suggests that it would be more fruitful to regard the two tendencies – the story and the attractions – as operating simultaneously within the same episode, instead of simple dichotomy.[638] And this is also the case of the relationships between the plot and affective, emotional and sensorial moments in the film.

As mentioned in this project, slow cinema has been favoured by critics in regards to the fact that it offers more interesting artistic accounts than contemporary Hollywood cinema can produce. What's more, slow cinema can be considered as a countermovement to the contemporary requirement that all doings have to display the greatest efficacy. Whereas a Hollywood film, being a product of capital economy, tries to reach the maximum effect by investing minimum effort through the use of narrative economy, slow cinema is the opposite because no conclusion can be so easily achieved. Hence the effort demanded from the viewer is much greater, and, if the viewer does not comply with the rules of the game, his cinematic experience may end abruptly in frustration.

In any case, slow cinema is a time-consuming experience, and the decision to spend 2.5 hours (or 7 hours for Béla Tarr's *Sátántango*) of your time watching such a film, is certainly not only a manifestation of your cinematic taste but also an expression of your attitude towards the issue of whether efficacy is necessary for experiencing art.

This thesis will be concluded with two remarks. One concerns the possibility for further research into slow cinema. The other is related to the prospects of the slow cinema movement altogether. A reproach can perhaps be made of associationist reasoning in what David Bordwell saw almost twenty years ago as one of the deadly sins of film scholars[639]. He describes it as "a bricolage of parallels, interpretative leaps, and nifty but unsupported conclusions" which "meshes smoothly with the juggling of terms, names, and references encouraged by the bricolage strategy."[640]

However, even if this project can be reproached for using bricolage as the main methodological tool, it can also serve as a template for other scholars from such disciplines as psychology to offer research that is more profound and infused with psychological evidence that would

637 For more information on this division see Frank Kessler *The Cinema of Attractions as Dispositif* in Wanda Strauven (ed.) *The Cinema of Attractions Reloaded*, Amsterdam, 2007, p. 57-58.
638 Ibid., p. 58.
639 David Bordwell *Film Studies and Grand Theory in* David Bordwell, Noél Carroll (eds.) *Post-Theory. Reconstructing Film Studies*, Madison, 1996, p. 24.
640 Ibid., p. 24.

confirm or confute my claims. As an example - some research that was carried out at the University of Vienna. The research team, led by Hanna Brinckmann, took as their starting point the claim launched during Documenta II (1959) that abstract art is a universal language, comprehensible to everyone regardless of cultural, political or historical background. In an empirical study where the eye-movements of the participants were recorded, the research group came to the conclusion that in comparing the perception and evaluation of abstract and representational artworks, there was no evidence to be found that abstract art elicits a more homogeneous perception than representational paintings.[641]

Similar empirical studies concerning eye-movement and films have also been carried out. Psychologist Tim Smith analyzed the viewer's gaze during a screening of the film *There Will Be Blood*. The results he obtained sustained the Bordwell thesis of how the filmmaker organizes the shot in order to direct audience's attention.[642]

In any case, the most important point is the need for film studies to co-operate more and more with other disciplines, because such collaborative efforts can deliver very interesting insights as was demonstrated in the chapter on statistical style analysis. Two questions were explored therein: whether parametricity, which has always been considered an inevitable feature of slow cinema, can also be determined from statistical data alone, and secondly, whether we can determine the proper length of a shot that could serve as an indicator of slow cinema. For the first question the conclusion was that parametricity can be determined only by taking into account a film's narrative analysis. For the second question, 30 seconds ASL seems to be the dividing line after which it may be deemed slow cinema, with the standard ASL for a slow film lying somewhere between 50 and 85 seconds per shot.

But, as was reminiscent throughout this project, the areas of research that have become the focus of cinema studies during the last decade or so already go far beyond the capacity of a sole cinema scholar. (The esteemed cinematic scholar Richard Maltby, speaking in a slightly different context, even demands a practical re-skilling for film historians[643]). Thus not only the associationist reasoning would disappear, but also more concrete insights into an audience's engagement with a film could be obtained.

The second concluding remark concerns the dependence of the film's style on the technical solutions at hand. Obviously, the flourishing of extended takes has been nourished by the introduction of digital cameras, which made the constrains on the stylistic freedom of

641 Hanna Brinckmann, Laura Commare, Helmut Leder, Raphael Rosenberg *Abstract Art as a Universal Language?* in *Leonardo*, Vol. 47, No. 3, 2014, p. 256-257.
642 Tim Smith *Watching you watch There will be blood* in David Bordwell *Observations on film art*, 14.02. 2011., available at http://www.davidbordwell.net/blog/2011/02/14/watching-you-watch-there-will-be-blood/ (Accessed 23.09.2012).
643 Richard Maltby *New Cinema Histories* in Richard Maltby, Daniel Biltereyst, Philippe Meers (eds.) *Explorations in New Cinema History: Approaches and Case Studies*, Chichester, 2011, p.34.

directors by 35 mm film camera and its reel length of only 10 minutes redundant. Now we are undergoing a game-changing phase regarding cinema consumption habits as well. Similarly to the 1980s, when the introduction of VHS completely changed the way films were consumed, the increasing importance of various portable digital devices used for watching films is already having a consequence on our film consumption habits. Barry Salt, in his wildly acclaimed research on film style and technology, plausibly demonstrates that new technical innovations have influenced the way the films look.[644] But screening conditions also have to be taken into account – the best example here is the advent of television which, as a consequence, yielded the augmented use of single shots because the screen was now so small. Following Salt's thesis, I am eager for the possible future of slow cinema, because for such decisive slow cinema experiences as the presence of the image or immersion into the shot, the darkened cinema environment seems to be causal. Durational shots watched on portable devices cannot sustain our interest for a longer time period, because surrounding distractions are an enormous obstacle, be it a barking dog or kids onboard a shuttle-train.

This thesis was the first attempt to demonstrate that there are narrative structures in slow cinema, just as in mainstream films, and that it is possible to detect certain regularities about them. Surely, slow cinema excels as a prime example of linear narratives – a feature that is not consistent with the tendency towards non-linearity so common in contemporary cinema. All in all, slow cinema has to be regarded as just one possibility amongst multiple options in contemporary film in how to organize a story into a plot. In comparison to the second half of the 20th century when the division between Hollywood and art-house cinema prevailed and both were seen as the only two possible alternatives, a huge diversity of different narrative forms flourishes nowadays. To name a few – unreliable narration, nonlinear narratives, fragmented storytelling and short films. (Not to mention the diverse possibilities offered by the TV series.) Thus, narrative forms in contemporary cinema are undergoing a huge change towards a multitude of narrative forms, of which slow cinema constitutes only a small facet.

The conclusions of this thesis are derived from the analysis of only six examples, however the claim was made that the ideas put forward in this study could be applied not only to other films by filmmakers usually associated with slow cinema: Bruno Dumont, Albert Serra, Gus van Sant, Paz Encina, Abbas Kiarostami, Sharunas Bartaa and Lav Diaz, but also to the works of such forerunners to durational cinema as Roberto Rossellini, Michelangelo Antonioni, Chantal Akerman, Wim Wenders, Andrei Tarkovsky and Alexander Sokurov. If analysed from the point of view of structural analysis as was done in the present project, we can obtain stunning conclusions about the narrative structures of their films, and such an analysis would contribute even more to the findings herein, that, for example, the act scheme forms a universal narrative principle.

644 Barry Salt *Film Style and Technology: History& Analysis*, 1st edition 1983.

Flanagan, quoted in this thesis numerous times, concludes his project on slow cinema on an optimistic note by stating that the tendency to produce slow films will "most likely continue to strengthen in years to come."[645]

Even if we take objection to the consideration that the distribution of slow films will continue to mainly take place though film festivals and not through portable devices, the development of the festival scene and the financial support of both – the festival circuit and film production – will also influence if not the look of the films, then at least the amount of them being made. For the time being it can be stated that 28% of Europeans attend film festivals.[646] However, if we consider film festivals as the most common place where slow films are screened; we cannot conclude that 28% of Europeans have seen a slow film at least once in their lifetime. The same research carried out by the European Commission concludes that "European films are considered original and thought-provoking, but audiences are critical of "slow or heavy" storylines."[647] The preferences of audiences are never an obstacle for a gifted artist to implement his vision into an artwork, overcoming whatever hard struggle they may face to present a film to the viewer. A review of *Jauja*, Lisandro Alonso's newest film, screened at the Cannes Film Festival in 2014 whilst the conclusion of this thesis was being written, demonstrates that slow cinema continues to exist. It starts as follows**: "**A man makes his way very, very slowly across a desolate Patagonian landscape." And "After a long introductory section", "an encounter [takes place] which comes as a bolt from the blue", the film "ends up taking us to completely unfamiliar terrain".[648] Very similar phrases - similar to the ones we have seen in connection to all the case examples herein. What's more, Turkish filmmaker Nuri Bilge Ceylan, also considered a representative of slow cinema, received the Palme d'Or in 2014 for his film *Winter Sleep*. All this allows for bright prospects for slow cinema, at least for the present moment.

645 Matthew Flanagan *Slow Cinema': Temporality and Style in Contemporary Art and Experimental Film*, 2012, University of Exeter, p. 216, available at https://ore.exeter.ac.uk/repository/handle/10036/4432 (Accessed May 2013).
646 European Commission, Press release *Lack of choice driving demand for film downloads*, 6.02.2014, available at http://europa.eu/rapid/press-release_IP-14-120_en.htm (Accessed 19.05.2014).
647 European Commission, Press release *Lack of choice driving demand for film downloads*, 6.02.2014, available at http://europa.eu/rapid/press-release_IP-14-120_en.htm (Accessed 19.05.2014).
648 Jonathan Romney *Jauja* in *Screen International*, 19.05.2014, available at http://m.screendaily.com/5072155.article (Accessed 19.05.2014).

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