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LOOKING TO THE PAST:
A COGNITIVE AND MULTIMODAL ANALYSIS
OF FILM FLASHBACKS

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ABSTRACT

This dissertation deals with the cognitive dimension of film flashbacks (narrative retrospections) taking into account their multimodal quality. The flashback is a very rich multimodal device which combines different visual resources (variable framing, camera movements, editing, and so on), as well as acoustic ones (music, dialogue, diverse sound effects, etc.) in order to represent a temporal leap from the present to the past. But, apart from its richness and versatility, it is also a fixed device and common enough in film to be studied in a systematic way. Given those characteristics —formal variety alongside stability—, the question that this dissertation poses is how these sequences work at a cognitive level so the viewer understands them successfully. In order to provide an answer, a number of flashback examples from around forty films have been analyzed attending to the multimodal cues offered by each retrospective scene and to the cognitive processes triggered in the spectator's mind by such cues. On one hand, it is shown how many of the cinematic tools employed as flashback cues are not purely arbitrary devices, but they are based upon natural daily human activities such as gaze following and joint attention. On the other hand, Conceptual Integration Theory is taken as a theoretical point of departure to account for the cognitive functioning of flashbacks, and thus the mental operations behind retrospection scenes are discussed in terms of blended joint attention, time compression, viewpoint compression and identity connections. Ultimately, a cognitive model of flashback comprehension is proposed, and it is also argued that film comprehension, and particularly the successful understanding of film flashbacks is possible because cinematic narrative techniques are built upon many of the perceptual and cognitive abilities spectators use on a daily basis to interact with the real world. Thus, films are deliberately designed for the viewer's mind.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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INTRODUCTION:
A COGNITIVE APPROACH TO FILM

1.1 CINEMA AND COGNITION

Throughout the history of cinema (a relatively young medium with little more than a century of life), the approaches adopted for its analysis have been diverse. Since the early years, the exploration of the possibilities of the cinematic technique came hand in hand with a theoretical interest in the new medium. Intellectuals from diverse fields and filmmakers themselves began to theorize about different aspects of film: prominent examples of this are, for instance, psychologist Hugo Münsterberg's book *The Photoplay: A Psychological Study* (1916) (one of the first cognitive considerations of cinema), and the Soviet Montage theory propounded by authors such as Eisenstein and Pudovkin (cf. Corringan & White, 2004: 437, 441-443). Over time, the so-called classical film theory was developed by figures like Balázs, Arnheim, Bazin or Kracauer, who among other things discussed cinema in terms of Formalism and Realism (cf. Corringan & White, 2004: 443-447). At the same time, up to the 1970s "auteur theory" was the predominant conceptual framework, which gained ground, among other reasons, thanks to the *Cahiers du Cinéma* critics, European postwar "art cinema" and the appearance of major directors in Hollywood in the 1950s (Bordwell, 1996: 4-5).

It was not until the 1960s that film studies were born as an academic discipline. However, being a new field it was in need of accreditation, and in order to gain academic status film studies resorted to trendy theories of the moment, some of them already established: first to structuralism, and later on to semiotics, Marxism, psychoanalysis, and others (cf. Bordwell, 1996). In the light of structuralism and semiotics, one of the ideas that rapidly gained

popularity was that of approaching film as a kind of "language": that is, as some sort of code composed of signifiers and their corresponding signifieds, and governed by a set of rules which would work as a "film grammar". This approach sought to account for how film creates and conveys meaning, and how as a consequence the viewer has access to it (cf., for instance, Carroll, 2003: 14- 25; Bordwell, 2010: 3-5; Bordwell, 2011b).

Broadly speaking, what has come to be called (by its proponents) "contemporary film theory" took shape from the 1970s on, emerging from a combination of the abovementioned theories. But, from a critical position, it has also been named SLAB theory, since it is mostly based on Saussurian semiotics, Lacanian psychoanalysis, Althusserian Marxism, and Barthesian textual theory (Bordwell, 1989b: 385), and it has also been called Grand Theory due to its all-encompassing, totalizing aim and doctrine-driven functioning (cf. Bordwell, 1996; Carroll, 1996a). In this tradition, "[t]heorizing becomes the routine application of some larger, unified theory to questions of cinema, which procedure churns out roughly the same answers, or remarkably similar answers, in every case" (Carroll, 1996a: 41). During the 1980s, a current critical with this Grand Theory emerged in the light of the "cognitive turn" that was taking place in different fields of knowledge. An alternative framework began to develop, that of Cognitive Film Theory, which opposed the reigning paradigm in a number of ways[1]: first, it did (and still does) not claim to be *the* Theory of film, but rather a research program with a multidisciplinary spirit that draws from a variety of theories from different disciplines (e.g. anthropology, neuroscience, psychology, linguistics, etc.) in order to answer specific questions (Carroll, 1996a: 38-41). In this sense, Cognitive Film Theory also advocates for bottom-up inquiry: that is, for middle-level or piecemeal research that proceeds by asking particular questions about films (Bordwell, 1996: 26-30) and seeks answers by being "committed to clarity of exposition and argument and to the relevance of empirical evidence and the standards of science (where appropriate)" (Plantinga, 2002: 20).

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[1] Summaries of the cognitive approach to film can be found, for instance, in Bordwell (1989a), Plantinga (2002) or Bordwell (2009a).

Furthermore, the cognitive program focuses on *explaining* films (i.e. accounting for how they function, particularly in relation to the viewer) rather than on *interpreting* them (i.e. offering new "readings" of specific films), and in this way it also sets itself apart from Grand Theory (Bordwell, 1996: 24-26; Carroll, 1996a: 41-44) (cf. also chapter 2, section 2.2.2, and chapter 3, section 3.1.1).

This cognitive approach to cinema has also been named "naturalistic" because many of its advocates have underlined the centrality of viewers' natural cognitive capacities in the activity of watching films (e.g. Anderson, 1996; Carroll, 2003: 10-58; Bordwell, 2010; Carroll & Seeley, 2013). This view directly opposes that of cinema as language (i.e. a system of codes), since it argues that we do not make sense of films because we learn their particular codes or conventions (at least not like we learn a given natural language), but because movies are designed to appeal to the same natural abilities with which we perceive and understand the world around us.

The present study is placed within this cognitive, naturalistic trend in film analysis. Specifically, it addresses the question of how film viewers successfully comprehend movie flashbacks: why a device which is jarring in principle (it breaks a narrative's temporal and spatial continuity) is usually understood without effort by spectators? Which are the cognitive principles at work behind this device? Certainly, narrative retrospections are not exclusive to cinematic discourse: they are indeed present in all kinds of narratives, from the most elaborated ones to the spontaneous everyday stories that come up in conversations. Retrospections are even part of our own daily reasoning. Considering all this, a hypothesis could be raised at a broader level: it may be that human beings are naturally "narrative", and thus concepts such as those of sequentiality or cause/effect are fundamental tools of our way of thinking (cf., for instance, Anderson, 1996: 144-149, for some "ecological" reflections on narrative). One of the questions that ensue is whether this "narrative quality" of our minds predisposes us to naturally understand film narratives (and therefore movie flashbacks, being them a particular subversion of this narrative sequentiality), which would rely on basic daily narrative mechanisms and other natural cognitive processes.

The cognitive analysis of flashbacks proposed here draws from concepts and theories set forth by different disciplines, mostly by cognitive linguistics, narratology and film studies. However, it relies primarily on a particular theory of cognition, Blending Theory or Conceptual Integration Theory (Fauconnier & Turner, 2002), which will be discussed in the following section.

1.2 CONCEPTUAL INTEGRATION THEORY

1.2.1   BLENDING THEORY: AN OVERVIEW

Developed by Gilles Fauconnier and Mark Turner (2002), Blending or Conceptual Integration Theory is a cognitivist framework that accounts for how human beings construct and comprehend meanings in a broad sense. Essentially, Fauconnier and Turner argue that conceptual blending is a basic (but complex) mental operation characteristic of human beings' way of thinking and which "is as indispensable for basic everyday thought as it is for artistic and scientific abilities" (Fauconnier & Turner, 2002: vi). This cognitive operation is composed of non-conscious processes which are prompted by "language expressions (but also visual images, sounds, gestures, and all other meaningful forms of human expression) (…) [that] the human mind uses in an act of meaning construction and comprehension" (Dancygier, 2006: 6). Thus, we perceive manifestations of conceptual integration, but those are only the tip of the iceberg: the complex mental processes motivated by those forms take place beneath the surface, and they are so natural to us that they go unnoticed.

The theory, largely based on Fauconnier's (1994 [1985], 1997) Mental Spaces Theory, proposes a model of dynamic construction of meaning that involves the integration of information from different input mental spaces (temporary conceptual constructs set up as we think and talk), which are prompted by linguistic and non-linguistic (images, gestures, etc.) units. Counterpart elements from the different input spaces are connected via cross-space mappings, and those spaces and their connections shape a conceptual integration network. In the network, different elements from the input spaces are

selectively projected into a blended space, where new meanings that were not available in any of the inputs appear (i.e. emergent structure). Furthermore, those features shared by all the input spaces in the network make up a generic space which also takes part in the blend. Also, structured, long-term knowledge may be projected into the blend in the shape of cognitive frames. Fundamentally, processes of compression and decompression, which are central to conceptual blending, operate at different levels in a given integration network. Basically, compression involves tightening up the vital relations (e.g. Time, Space, Identity, Change, etc.) that exist between elements in the input spaces, and decompression is the opposite process. As a result, the blend can be manipulated as a unit, and it gives access to an otherwise complex set of conceptual structure in a simple and clear manner.

These and other concepts related to Blending Theory will be explained in depth as they appear in the flashback analyses of chapters 3, 4 and 5. However, a simple case will serve now to preliminarily illustrate these concepts and operations. Fauconnier and Turner (2002: 59-62) propose an example of conceptual integration network which has now become a classic one in blending literature: "the debate with Kant". Imagine that a contemporary philosopher who studies Kant's writings gives a lecture, and in the course of the session he says things like "Kant disagrees with me on this point". Or, after finding no answers to his own questions in Kant's texts, he states: "And he [Kant] gives no answer". This scenario activates at least two main input spaces: one for the contemporary philosopher (who studies Kant, but has his own ideas), and another one for Kant himself (with his own thinking and his writings). There are cross-space mappings between both inputs, and the counterpart elements include Kant and the professor, their respective languages (German and English), their times and places of activity, their respective claims, etc. Elements from both inputs are projected into a blended space, since only in it a philosophical discussion between the men in both input spaces can take place. Furthermore, "the frame of 'debate' has been recruited to frame Kant and the modern philosopher as engaged in simultaneous debate, mutually aware, using a single language to treat a recognized topic" (Fauconnier & Turner, 2002: 60). But

projection of elements from the inputs to the blend is selective, since, for instance, only one of the two languages of the philosophers is projected (English, and not Kant's German). Also, in the blend the temporal and spatial distance between the two philosophers is compressed, so that the two of them are face to face having a debate. Finally, there is also emergent structure in "running the blend": the debate could go on, new questions and answers could be elaborated, attitudes like defensiveness or over-confidence could appear, etc. All in all, the discussion between the two philosophers can only be conceived through the activation of a conceptual integration network. In this case (as in many others) "we do not even notice the blending (…) since the general blending template it deploys is conventional for engaging the ideas of a previous thinker" (Fauconnier & Turner, 2002: 61). But this only demonstrates the abovementioned non-conscious, natural quality of conceptual integration processes, whose existence has been supported so far by several kinds of experimental research (cf. among many others Coulson, 2001; Eppe et al., 2018).

1.2.2   FILM FLASHBACKS AND BLENDING THEORY: A COGNITIVE ANALYSIS

Conceptual Integration Theory seems like a suitable framework for the analysis of film flashbacks for a number of reasons. First, Blending Theory seeks to account for our basic general capacity for conceptual integration, a kind of mental operation that underlies our simplest everyday thoughts and activities, but also our understanding of sophisticated products like literature and art. Thus, conceptual integration should also play an essential part in our comprehension of films. Furthermore, Blending has already been successfully applied to the study of different fields such as literature (e.g. Dancygier, 2012b) and multimodal communication (e.g. Dancygier & Vandelanotte, 2017; Vandelanotte & Dancygier, 2017). Cinema, being a particular kind of multimodal narrative discourse, could also benefit from the theoretical framework that Blending proposes. Actually, there is already some research on conceptual integration and film (e.g. Oakley & Tobin, 2012; Tobin, 2017), and the prospects look promising. Finally, the cognitive, naturalistic approach to film exposed above, in its multidisciplinary spirit, could profit from Conceptual Blending and

find in this framework a fruitful theoretical ground to explain how viewers make sense of film flashbacks. Thus, another important objective of this work is to test the validity of Blending Theory for the analysis of cinema, and more specifically of movie flashbacks.

At this point, it should be emphasized that this study does not intend to offer new "readings" of a series of flashbacks. And finding new interpretations is not an aim of Blending Theory either: rather, it seeks to explain some of the backstage cognitive processes at work when we make sense of products like a novel, a painting or a film. Thus, the main goal of this study is to explain how viewers successfully and effortlessly understand movie flashbacks as such (i.e. as narrative retrospections), and not as something else. Certainly, the line between comprehension and interpretation is very thin: Persson (2003), for instance, distinguishes six levels (from zero to five) in the process of understanding cinematic meaning. Levels zero to three involve basic perception, object and character recognition and categorization, and identifying abstract situations (which entails relations between events, character psychology, etc.) (Persson, 2003: 27-32). At level four, however, more abstract meanings emerge (e.g. thematic inferences, symbolical understandings, etc.), and "we enter the twilight zone between comprehension and interpretation" (Persson, 2003: 32). Finally, Persson describes level five as that of interpretation in a broad sense, which involves, among other things, aesthetic judgments and critical evaluations of a film's message. Nevertheless, Persson (2003: 36-37) also points out that the viewer does not simply move up along this continuum from the lower to the upper levels, step by step: rather, all the levels interact, and bottom-up and top-down processes may overlap. However, although comprehension and interpretation are closely related, they are not completely inseparable. The cognitive analysis of flashbacks proposed here focuses on the pure intelligibility of cinematic retrospections, and not on how film spectators subjectively (e.g. emotionally) interpret certain flashback scenes. Also, in this exercise of "cold cognition", emotions, feelings and the like will be left out in the majority of cases. The reason for excluding both interpretation and emotions is mostly one of practicality, and also the fact that pure

"cold" cognitive processes set the basis for the other two dimensions. Bordwell (2008: 150), anticipating possible objections, states:

> [i]n isolating comprehension as a central viewing activity, the cognitive perspective is open to the charge that it ignores other aspects of the experience and of the film itself. What, for instance, about emotion (…)? And what about interpretation (…)? (…) Up to a point, setting emotion aside is a useful methodological idealization (…) [since] many emotional responses ride upon cognitive judgments. As for interpretation, (…) as an intuitive but principled activity, it is highly amenable to a cognitive explanation.

All the same, the cognitive analysis of certain flashbacks will lead to specific comments on the poetic value of the devices employed whenever that poetic level is of significance for the comprehension of the flashback scene (cf. chapter 5, section 5.3).

Another objection that could be raised is related to the opposition between individual viewers and universal responses (cf. Plantinga, 2009). This study does not consider particular viewers in the way that an experimental audience analysis would, but instead, on the basis of human beings' shared cognitive abilities, it assumes a standard, virtual viewer as starting point. As Bordwell (2004: 212) argues, "the [film] text is so made that it seeks certain intersubjective regularities of response"; and although there is always room left for "independent" interpretations, at least "*some* intersubjective regularities of response" must lie at the basis of film comprehension. Certainly, the analysis of individual viewers' response to films taking into account the spectators' ethnicity, social class, gender, etc. is important as well. But it is not necessary to go so far as to ignore the similarities between viewers, like cultural film studies do in the name of social and political concerns. Plantinga (2009: 258) aptly points out that, ultimately, "[i]n scholarship about spectatorship, both viewer differences *and* viewer similarities must eventually be accounted for".

Finally, a brief clarification about the kinds of films that will be analyzed. I have selected a corpus of movies from a variety of genres and from different periods in film history. However, most of them could be described as films with a classical narrative style, or, in a

broader sense, as conforming to the principles of narrative continuity, which involves continuity of time, space and action (Bordwell & Thompson, 2008: 231-251). This type of narrative relies also on relationships of cause-effect between events (as opposed to casual or chance links being the rule) (cf. Bordwell 1995 [1985]: 206-207). Thus, on the other hand, I have not considered experimental cinema, for instance, or films without a clear narrative thread.

Also, and even though this is not a diachronic discussion of the flashback, another question might be answered by the end of the study: once the basic flashback structure was established, did the device evolve towards more creative patterns that required some sort of "cinematic literacy" on the part of the viewer? In other words, it should be considered if flashbacks are successfully understood by spectators purely because they are designed as to prompt certain natural cognitive operations on the viewer's mind, or, on the other hand, if viewers comprehend flashbacks because they have learned how to do so.

1.3 OUTLINE OF THE DISSERTATION

The dissertation is divided into five chapters (six if this introduction to the cognitive dimension of film is considered the first one). Chapter 2, "Flashbacks in film", deals with the *flashback* concept. The narratological term *analepsis*, as defined by Genette, is discussed, since the *flashback* is its cinematic counterpart. A few typological distinctions are also pointed out, some of them proposed by Genette with respect to analepsis, and others suggested by authors like Chatman and Bordwell regarding film flashbacks proper. Finally, the evolution of flashbacks throughout film history is briefly outlined, as well as the varied theoretical approaches that have been adopted for the study of the device.

Chapters 3 to 5 delve into the cognitive dimension of flashbacks, and are devoted to three specific mental processes involved in the viewer's comprehension of retrospection scenes: blended joint attention, viewpoint compression, and time compression. Chapter 3, "Blended Joint Attention", analyzes in depth how our natural,

everyday capacity for joint attention is directly involved in our successful understanding of movie flashbacks. The section discusses how the viewer's attention is guided in such scenes, particularly by means of point-of-view editing, and how a flashback comes to be understood as narrating past events in the story. In order to unravel the cognitive intricacies of the flashback device, more specific Blending-Theory related concepts are introduced, such as narrative mental spaces, space builders and narrative anchors.

Chapter 4, "Viewpoint Compression", focuses on the interplay of perspectives that takes place in every flashback scene, and explains how a complex set of viewpoints is accessible to the viewer by means of cognitive processes of compression. Also, the cognitive implications of point-of-view editing are widely discussed. More specifically, the character's double perspective (that of the present and the one belonging to the narrated past) displayed in memory flashbacks is discussed, as well as some instances of viewpoint compression through decompression of the character's identity. Finally, the multiplicity of viewpoints involved in flashbacks is further illustrated through the analysis of "replay flashbacks" (i.e. re-enacted scenes).

In chapter 5, "Time Compression", the process of compressing time relations in flashback scenes is discussed. On the one hand, it is shown how the temporal relation that exists between present and past narrative mental spaces is compressed by means of scaling and syncopation processes. The opposite operation, that of decompression of time, is shown at work as well in other particular flashback examples. Furthermore, identity connections, which are closely related to time compression and are essential for the comprehension of flashbacks, are briefly explained. On the other hand, an issue already analyzed in chapter 3 is further explored here: that of the emergence of the "past meaning", that is, the (cognitive) reasons why the events narrated in a flashback are understood as belonging to the past in the story.

Finally, chapter 6 functions both as an overview and a test of the theoretical framework exposed in the previous sections. Through an

overall analysis of two flashback scenes, this chapter sums up the main concepts employed for the cognitive analysis of retrospection scenes, and seeks to validate the proposed framework as a suitable model to account for the cognitive functioning of flashbacks.

2

FLASHBACKS IN FILM

2.1 CINEMATIC RETROSPECTIONS

2.1.1 DEFINING FLASHBACKS

Retrospections are common to all kinds of narration, from the more spontaneous and informal, such as daily oral narratives, to the more elaborate ones such as those of literature and film. Indeed, flashbacks were not invented by film, but have been employed in (Western) literature since its origins (cf., for instance, Genette, 1972: 79-80; De Jong, 2014: 135-137). Narratology uses the term *analepsis* to refer to these narrative retrospections, which Genette (1972: 82) defines as "any a posteriori evocation of an event previous to the point of the story in which we find ourselves"[2]. In other words, as defined by the OED, *analepsis* is "[a] literary device in narrative, in which a past event is narrated at a point later than its chronological place in a story".

Maureen Turim, in an extended study of film flashbacks (the most comprehensive to date), offers a similar definition of the cinematic device: "a flashback is simply an image or a filmic segment that is understood as representing temporal occurrences anterior to those in the images that preceded it" (Turim, 1989: 1). But, beyond the explanation of the term (which in fact matches the classical concept of analepsis), what is really interesting about Turim's contribution is her review of the etymology of the term *flashback*. Around the turn of the twentieth century, the word *flash* was used to refer not only to a brief burst of light, but also to talk about explosions and the ignition of engines, as well as to refer to a particular kind of glance. And so,

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[2] The original definition is in French: "[T]oute évocation après coup d'un événement antérieur au point de l'histoire où l'on se trouve". The translation is mine.

Turim argues (1989: 3), "[t]his combination of brief instances of light, of explosive power, and of the change in direction and quality of a glance are appropriate antecedents to the term flashback in its cinematic sense". These specific meanings of the form *flash* may be the reason why film preferred the term *flashback* over *analepsis*, since in some way it refers to the speed with which film editing introduces temporal and spatial leaps to the past in the story. Later on, when the term *flashback* was consolidated in the cinematic field, it started to be used in literary studies as well, as a synonym for analepsis (Turim, 1989: 4). The current definition of *flashback* in the OED reflects this expansion in the use of the term: a *flashback* is "[a] scene in a film, novel, etc. set in a time earlier than the main story". However, even though the cinematographic origin of the word is not usually mentioned, and although film flashbacks do not normally take the form of mental flashes (as will be discussed below, they are often introduced by marked transitions and in a slow and smooth way), the term *flashback* still "marks a recognition that something particularly transformative and jarring occurred in [early] cinema's montage of disparate temporalities in disjunct order" (Turim, 1989: 4). Moreover, the cinematic concept of flashback has spread out to other fields such as psychology, in which it refers to the mental images that come up to someone as a result of trauma or drug use (Turim, 1989: 5).

2.1.2   STORY, DISCOURSE AND TIME

When talking about storytelling, whether cinematic, literary or of some other kind, there are two essential concepts which have been much discussed: *story* and *narrative discourse* (Abbott, 2007: 40)[3]. Different authors have used diverse terms to refer to this dichotomy: Russian Formalists talked about *fabula* and *syuzhet*, a terminology that in turn influenced Todorov's distinction between *histoire* (story) and *discours* (discourse), and Genette further elaborated these concepts (cf.

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[3] *Narrative discourse* refers to the way the story is told, how it is communicated. In this sense, it consists of two distinct elements: *plot* and *narration* (Abbott, 2007: 40). *Plot* is used to refer to the story's "emplotment", and in that sense it is "the art by which a story is delivered" (constructed and disclosed) (Abbott, 2007: 44). *Narration*, on the other hand, taken in a narrow sense, refers to the narrator's telling of the story, and its analysis involves issues such as voice, focalization, distance, etc. (Abbott, 2007: 44).

Abbott, 2007; Scheffel et al., 2014). These (and other) narratological concepts have also been applied to the analysis of film (cf. chapter 4) by authors like Chatman (1978), for instance, who consolidated the pair *story/discourse*. In general terms, *story* is "the basic sequence of events that can be abstracted from any narrative telling" (Bridgeman, 2007: 53). Thus, it is basically composed of action (events) and characters, and it moves forward (chronologically) in time (Abbott, 2007: 41). It is the equivalent term of the Russian Formalists' *fabula* (cf. Chatman, 1978: 19-20; Bordwell, 1995 [1985]: 49).

On the other hand, *discourse* is "the expression, the means by which the content [story] is communicated" (Chatman, 1978: 19). In other words, it is "the particular 'putting into language' of a nonlinguistic sequence of events" (Bridgeman, 2007: 64), although that language or way of expression does not necessarily have to be verbal, as is the case with film, for instance. However, Bordwell (1995 [1985]: 51) points out that this notion of discourse does not equate to the concept of *syuzhet*: the *syuzhet* is, specifically, "the actual arrangement and presentation of the fabula" (Bordwell, 1995 [1985]: 50), and it is usually translated as "plot". Speaking about film narration, Bordwell (1995 [1985]: 50, 344) argues that it employs two systems, *syuzhet* and film style (the latter understood as the system of cinematic devices), in order to guide the viewer in the construction of the story (or *fabula*).

From the categorization of the temporal relations between story and discourse that Genette (1972) develops, Bordwell (1995 [1985]) proposes a description of the relations between "story time" (fabula) and "narration time" (syuzhet plus style) in film. However, Bordwell clarifies that his adaptation of Genette's system does not imply a conceptual correspondence between discourse and syuzhet. As explained above, Bordwell understands the syuzhet as one of the systems involved in the construction of the story, and therefore takes "narration time" as a whole and analyzes its relations with "story time" (Bordwell, 1995 [1985]: 346). Genette (1972) establishes three categories of temporal relations: order, duration, and frequency. For the study of flashbacks, the category of order is the most important one, since it deals with those discordances between the order of events in the fabula and in the syuzhet. There may be no deviation,

but there may also be cases of "anachrony", which can be of two kinds: *analepsis* (flashback) and *prolepsis* (flashforward) (Genette, 1972: 82). The flashback, then, is the result of a mismatch between the order of events in the story and the syuzhet, since some events are presented in the syuzhet at a later time than their actual happening in the fabula. Genette also distinguishes between different types of analepsis and prolepsis depending on their "scope" and "amplitude" (cf. Chatman, 1978: 65). These and other typological distinctions regarding flashbacks will be discussed in section 2.1.3.

As for the other two categories proposed by Genette, those of duration and frequency, they also establish a series of relations between story and syuzhet that give rise to different narrative possibilities. Genette (1972: 122-144) discusses five different kinds of duration which result from the relation between "story time" and "discourse time": summary, ellipsis, scene, stretch and pause (cf. Chatman, 1978: 67-78). Drawing from Genette's approach, Bordwell proposes three variables for film (fabula duration, syuzhet duration and screen duration) which relate to each other in terms of equality, expansion and contraction, thus resulting in diverse ways of narrative manipulation of fabula duration. *Fabula duration* is "the time that the viewer presumes the story action to take", while *syuzhet duration* is composed of "the stretches of time which the film dramatizes" (Bordwell, 1995 [1985]: 80). *Screen duration* (an essential variable of the film medium) is the "projection time", that is, the film's running time, which is materialized in the cinematic techniques that constitute the stylistic system: mise-en-scène, cinematography, editing, and sound (Bordwell, 1995 [1985]: 81). In *Citizen Kane* (1941), for instance, the syuzhet covers around 65 years of Kane's life, but the fabula spans about 70 years: we hear of some events that took place before Charlie was sent away with Thatcher, but those events are not dramatized. Finally, the film's running time is of almost 120 minutes (Bordwell & Thompson, 2008: 101). The relation between these three variables gives rise to a series of narrative "effects" of duration (Bordwell, 1995 [1985]: 81-84): equivalence, in which fabula, syuzhet and screen duration are all the same; reduction, in which fabula duration is reduced in two possible ways: via ellipsis (some portions of fabula time are omitted in the syuzhet) or through compression (fabula and

syuzhet duration are the same and greater than screen time, which condenses them but does not cause any syuzhet discontinuity); and, finally, expansion, in which fabula duration is increased either by insertion (fabula time is expanded by adding material at the level of syuzhet and style, and thus is the opposite effect to ellipsis) or by dilation (screen duration stretches out fabula and syuzhet duration, but no syuzhet discontinuity is perceived; it is the opposite of compression) (cf. chapter 5, section 5.3).

Finally, Genette (1972: 145-182) speaks of the relation of frequency between "story time" and "discourse time", which gives rise to three possibilities: narration can be singulative, repetitive and iterative. Again, Bordwell (1995 [1985]: 79-80) builds upon Genette's categories and proposes a similar classification, although he simplifies the terms: he speaks of fabula events represented in the syuzhet once, more than once or not at all. Furthermore, that representation may be in the form of recounting, enactment or both (cf. section 2.1.3). Regarding flashbacks, the frequency category which is most interesting is that of repetition (events are told, either recounted or enacted, more than once), since that is the case of "replay flashbacks", which constitute enacted repetitions (Bordwell, 1995 [1985]: 80). Usually, those flashbacks present the same event from different points of view, and that clashing of perspectives is employed with different narrative effects (cf. chapter 4, section 4.3.4).

2.1.3   SOME TYPOLOGICAL DISTINCTIONS

As mentioned above, Genette (1972) discusses different kinds of analepsis and prolepsis according to two variables: "scope" and "amplitude". Since my purpose here is the analysis of film flashbacks, I will focus only on what Genette says about analepsis. He defines "scope" as the temporal distance that separates the event narrated in the anachrony from the present time in the narrative (Genette, 1972: 89). Depending on their scope, analepses may be external, internal or mixed. Bordwell (1995 [1985]: 78), following Genette, also distinguishes between external and internal flashbacks: in external flashbacks, the events narrated are anterior to the beginning of the syuzhet, while internal flashbacks display events that fall within the

syuzhet, and thus are posterior to its inception[4]. A clear example of an external flashback is the one in *Casablanca* (1942), since it narrates events (Rick and Ilsa's love affair in Paris) which occurred before the first events presented by the syuzhet taking place in Casablanca, where Rick runs a nightclub. On the other hand, an internal flashback is, for instance, the replayed scene in *Mildred Pierce* (1945), which revisits the first scene in the film but from a different perspective. As for mixed analepses, they begin as external retrospections but end as internal ones (Genette, 1972: 101). Related to this classification according to the scope of flashbacks, Genette proposes yet another one based on the "amplitude" of analepses. "Amplitude" is the portion of story (more or less long) covered by the anachrony (Genette, 1972: 89), and depending on this variable analepses may be partial (they end with an ellipsis) or complete (they go up to the present point in the story) (Genette, 1972: 101). The combination of these two categories with those of externality and internality give rise to four possible kinds of analepses: external complete (e.g. *Sunset Blvd.*, 1950), external partial (e.g. *Casablanca*, 1942), internal complete (e.g. *The Shawshank Redemption,* 1994), and internal partial (e.g. *Vertigo*, 1958).

Another distinction is brought about by the terms *recounting*, *enactment* and *enacted recounting* as proposed by Chatman (1978: 32). Bordwell (1995 [1985]: 77-78) takes these concepts and applies them to film: instances of *recounting* are those in which characters communicate prior events by any means (writing, speech, film clips, etc.), while in cases of *enactment* the syuzhet directly presents prior events[5]. A combination of both is that of *enacted recounting*, in which "a

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[4] Genette further classifies internal analepses into homodiegetic and heterodiegetic. In internal homodiegetic analepses the events narrated cover the same line of action told in the present (Genette, 1972: 92), while the diegetic content of internal heterodiegetic analepses is different from that of the story being told in the present, and thus they do not imply a narrative interference (Genette, 1972: 91).

[5] Contrary to what Chatman states, Bordwell (1995 [1985]: 346) argues that recounting and enactment cannot be reduced to the classical pair *telling/showing*. In fact, he points out that "characters tell, or recount, even if they 'show' a videotape of prior events", and this would be an instance of recounting (Bordwell, 1995 [1985]: 346). Similarly, as discussed below, auditory flashbacks

character tells about past events, and the syuzhet then presents the events in a flashback" (Bordwell, 1995 [1985]: 78). A nice example of recounting is found in *Rebecca* (1940) (01:35:15-01:38:25): when Maxim and Mrs. de Winter are in the boathouse and he tells her the truth about Rebecca's death in that same cottage, the camera starts pacing the room as if it were following Rebecca's steps at that time. Where the viewer would have expected a flashback enacting Maxim's tale, there is instead a simple recounting of the past events and the extra effect of the camera showing step by step in the present the places where every piece of action took place. Furthermore, this poetic choice nurtures the construction of Rebecca as a mysterious and ghostly character. This scene, however, is not a flashback, since there are no images or sounds coming directly from the past: both sound (Maxim's narration) and image belong to the narrative's present. Indeed, flashbacks constitute instances either of enactment or of enacted recounting (Bordwell, 1995 [1985]: 78). Enactment does not necessarily have to be visual, though, as is the case of auditory flashbacks, in which the image belongs to the syuzhet's present, but the sound belongs to the past (Bordwell, 1995 [1985]: 77). Still, visual enactment is the most common for flashbacks, alongside enacted recounting (flashbacks introduced by a narrating voice, as in *The Barefoot Contessa* (1954) or *Forrest Gump* (1994)).

Finally, flashbacks can also be classified according to their relationship with a character's memories. Thus, one can speak of "memory flashbacks"[6], which represent a particular character's recollections, and "non-memory flashbacks", which are not linked to a character's memories. The former seem to be the most common, as Bordwell (1995 [1985]: 78-79) points out: "[i]n either the external or the internal case, the flashback is usually motivated psychologically, as character recollection. (...) The narration motivates the presentation of the flashback realistically, letting us eavesdrop on the character's memory". Also, memory flashbacks are closely related by their origin, as well as by their stylistic features, with film scenes or segments

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(even those of a "telling" nature) are instances of enactment. (Cf. chapter 4 for a discussion of *telling* and *showing* regarding film).

[6] Branigan (1984: 64, 75) calls "subjective flashbacks" these retrospection scenes linked to a character's act of recalling (cf. chapter 4, section 4.2.4).

representing dreams, hallucinations, counterfactuals, and the like (cf. section 2.2.1). However, in order to delimit my research, this study focuses solely on flashbacks, that is, on scenes or shots that display some "actual" past events in the story, which may pertain to a character's memories or not.

All these conceptual and terminological specifications have been set forth with the aim of defining more clearly film flashbacks as a distinct cinematic device. Nevertheless, my goal is not to classify each one of the flashbacks that I will discuss throughout this study. Some of the terms exposed above will be useful at some stages of my analysis, and will therefore be employed when necessary. It will be each flashback in particular that determines which concepts and terms need to be drawn upon for its proper discussion.

2.2 FLASHBACKS IN FILM HISTORY AND FILM THEORY

2.2.1   EVOLUTION OF FILM FLASHBACKS

The flashback is a cinematic device which can be traced back to the first years of film[7]. However, because many prints from that period have been lost, it is not possible to determine the first time a flashback was employed in a movie (Turim, 1989: 21). Furthermore, the question about the exact point in the history of cinema in which the flashback began may not be the most appropriate. As Turim (1989: 22) points out, "[w]e cannot assume that cinema has an autonomous history", since it is and always has been influenced by other narrative arts and by the cultural and intellectual interests of each period. There is, in fact, an interdependence between literature, theatre and film which is evident in the evolution of flashbacks (Turim, 1989: 22-25). Theatre, for instance, would use "vision scenes" that later influenced film flashbacks, and, conversely, cinema flashbacks lead to technical innovation in the theatre (Turim, 1989:

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[7] The following discussion about flashbacks in film history aims to be a general overview. References to periodization and to general evolution patterns will be limited to USA and European cinema because these were two of the focal points of filmic production and development, and also because the films that comprise the corpus for this dissertation belong mainly to those two traditions.

23-25). However, unlike theatre and literature, silent film had to exploit its visual means since, due to the lack of sound, verbal narration was very much restricted, but this apparent disadvantage resulted in the flashback becoming a genuinely cinematic narrative technique (Turim, 1989: 22, 32-33), a quality which was later inherited and developed by sound films (Turim, 1989: 49).

Before 1910, flashbacks were included in the broader category of "vision scenes", which also encompassed dream scenes, imaginary sequences, and the like (Turim, 1989: 27; Messaris, 1994: 105). Most probably, this kind of scenes employed the "image-within-the-image technique" in early cinema (at least in USA and European films) (Turim, 1989: 23-24). During the 1910s flashbacks evolved to differentiate themselves from "vision scenes", and thus became narrative retrospections in a more restricted sense (Turim, 1989: 28-29; Salt, 1992: 101-102). In the 1920s the device became a convention in USA cinema in two forms: the biographical flashback and the trial testimony flashback (Turim, 1989: 51-54), while in Europe it opened a path for innovation and experimentation in an avant-garde or modernist manner that took the flashback away from its more traditional forms (Turim, 1989: 61-64). Both cinematic traditions influenced each other in their use of flashbacks, but, as Turim points out (1989: 54-55), towards the end of the silent period[8] USA films particularly draw from the innovations coming from Europe.

The arrival of sound was a revolution for the cinema and it involved a number of important changes. Certainly, it affected the flashback as well, since what was previously enacted in a retrospection scene due to the absence of sound could now be verbally narrated, and thus a break of sequentiality at the visual level was not always necessary. The possibility of using a voice-over narrator was introduced as well, alongside other auditory resources. However,

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[8] During the 1920s, diverse technologies were developed for synchronized sound in film. But this process "occurred at different rates in different countries and involved many competing systems and patents" (Thompson & Bordwell, 2010: 177). Generally, *The Jazz Singer* (1927) is considered as the first "talkie" (or at least "part-talkie"), since it was the first film to include some synchronized dialogue in a realistic and natural way (Cook, 1981: 240). The first "all-talkie" was *Lights of New York* (1928) (Thompson & Bordwell, 2010: 178).

flashbacks were employed very little in Hollywood films from the 1930s (Turim, 1989: 106; Bordwell, 2017: 69, 73). It was not until the 1940s that flashbacks made a comeback in Hollywood cinema: the device became widespread, and was common in a variety of genres apart from film noir and the woman's psychological melodrama (Bordwell, 2017: 68). But the proliferation of the flashback during this decade is not to be taken in absolute terms, since the number of films with retrospection scenes was not that big[9]. The use of the flashback does stand out in the 1940s, however, in comparison with the previous decade and also because most of the films that did use flashbacks were prominent ones (e.g. *Citizen Kane*, 1941; *Casablanca*, 1942; *Double Indemnity*, 1944; *A Letter to Three Wives*, 1949) (Bordwell, 2017: 69). The now possible interplay between image and sound was exploited by using voice-over narration to introduce flashbacks (here flashbacks in radio dramas were also an influence; cf. Bordwell, 2017: 71), and many retrospection scenes were diegetically motivated (i.e. character based) as recounted or recalled past events (Bordwell, 2009b; Bordwell, 2017: 79). Most importantly, filmmakers drew from the established conventions of earlier periods but took them to the next level through experimentation and innovation (e.g. retelling events from different perspectives, using nested flashbacks, creating misleading flashbacks, etc.; Bordwell, 2011a), thus fulfilling their "desire to offer something at once fresh and familiar" (Bordwell, 2017: 123).

This trend continued until the mid 1950s, but then the flashback became less common at the end of the 1950s and during the 1960s in US cinema (Turim, 1989: 188). From World War II, it is the European "art cinema" movements (as well as some Japanese films) that experiment with the flashback and provide a further renewal of the device (Turim, 1989: 189-190). From then on, flashbacks have continued to be used in movies of all kinds. Narrative cinema, even

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[9] Bordwell et al. (1985) selected an unbiased sample of one hundred films for their study of classical Hollywood cinema, and only twenty of those films use flashbacks (1985: 42). On the other hand, Bordwell (2017: 69) points out that between 1942 and 1950 at least twenty-five flashback films were released each year: it is not a very big number considering the overall annual production of five hundred to seven hundred films, but it stands out in comparison with the 1930s.

the most commercial one, has been nourished both by the established conventions inherited from tradition and by the innovative movements that have brought novelty and creativity to the flashback device (cf. Greenberg & Gabbard, 1999). All in all, looking at the evolution of the flashback device it can be argued that its development

> is not a linear progression from an awkward form to an increasingly complex and sophisticated inscription. If we can apply terms to periods of flashback uses like "primitive", "classical", and "modernist", we also find that there are asynchronic developments that place some of the most modernist and innovative uses of the flashbacks [sic] in films of the twenties. [And] The modernist innovations of flashbacks during the sixties are a reprise of the flashback concepts developed in the twenties avant-garde. (Turim, 1989: 6)

The evolution of the flashback through the decades is also reflected in the variety of cues that have been employed to signal a narrative retrospection. The image-within-the-image technique was common before 1910, as mentioned above. Later on, during the 1910s and 1920s, flashbacks in US films were usually cued by dissolves and fades (Turim, 1989: 31; Salt, 1992: 84, 139-140, 165). The advent of sound allowed filmmakers to combine auditory and visual cues, as seen in numerous flashbacks from the 1940s and 1950s which employ both a voice-over narrator and a dissolve (e.g. *Citizen Kane*, 1941; *Double Indemnity*, 1944; *Sunset Blvd.*, 1950). More recent films also introduce flashbacks by means of a narrating voice (e.g. *Forrest Gump*, 1994), but dissolves seem to have lost prominence in favor of the cut (cf. chapter 3, particularly section 3.3.1). Other technical resources include point-of-view shots (or just a close-up of the character about to recall or narrate past events), visual elements and sounds functioning as "narrative anchors" in the present (cf. chapter 3), alterations of image or sound quality (e.g. distorted visuals), changes in the mise-en scène (e.g. costumes), variations in non-diegetic music, etc. (cf. Turim, 1989: 15-16). However, all these cues are not enough in themselves to mark a movie fragment as a flashback: they always rely on narrative context, which is essential to successfully understand any particular cue (Salt, 1992: 140).

Furthermore, it seems that nowadays films tend to remove the weight of meaning from too explicit cues and shift it to the context (Messaris, 1994).

2.2.2   FILM THEORY AND FLASHBACKS

As explained in the introductory chapter, the "cognitive turn" in film studies that took place around 1980 proposed an alternative to the Grand Theory which was dominating the studies on cinema. Basically, this all-encompassing theory applies structuralism, semiotics, psychoanalysis and other related approaches to the analysis of film with the aim of obtaining ultimate answers about the cinematic medium and its interaction with the film viewer. These theoretical approaches have also influenced the study of flashbacks in a variety of ways: Turim (1989), for instance, combines a number of theories in her discussion of the functioning of flashbacks, such as formalism, structuralism, psychoanalysis, theories of memory and consciousness, etc. She also analyzes how flashbacks dealing with historical events subjectivize history by filtering it through a particular character's memories, and how this process has ideological effects (Turim, 1989; cf. also Hayward, 2000: 134-136). On the other hand, psychoanalysis has been discussed as being inserted in flashback films in two ways: directly (when, for instance, the figure of the psychiatrist appears in the story, as in many US films from the 1940s and 1950s) and indirectly (the viewer becomes some kind of analyst whenever a character's memories are revealed) (cf. Turim, 1989: 18-19; Hayward, 2000: 136-140). Psychoanalysis, then, looks for what a given film is "unconsciously" saying (Turim, 1989: 19), and also inspires psychoanalysis-related plots to resort to flashback scenes that reveal repressed traumas, unconscious motives, and the like (cf. Greenberg & Gabbard, 1999).

These and other approaches to the study of film promoted by Grand Theory began to be criticized by a series of authors who found in the "cognitive" or "naturalistic turn" a more appropriate path for film analysis. Essentially, they proposed Cognitive Film Theory as an alternative, but they did not claim it to be an all-embracing theory: rather, it is a research program in favor of "piecemeal" theorizing (Bordwell, 1996; Carroll, 1996a; Plantinga, 2002; cf. also the

introductory chapter, and chapter 3, section 3.1.1). That is, instead of reading films in the manner of Grand Theory, looking for "traces of the larger processes made salient by the given theory" (Bordwell, 2011b), the cognitivist program advocates for posing "small", specific questions about how films are understood and then tries to find answers resorting to scientific (even empirical) methods, thus drawing from a number of research domains such as linguistics, psychology, neuroscience, etc. (cf. Bordwell, 2013b).

The analysis of flashbacks proposed in this dissertation places itself into this naturalistic research current. As stated in the introductory chapter, the question of how we successfully understand movie flashbacks will be addressed from a comprehensive perspective that integrates cognitive approaches to narrative and film, and, more specifically, it will test the validity of Blending or Conceptual Integration Theory (Fauconnier & Turner, 2002) as a tool to explain the viewer's comprehension of film flashbacks.

3

BLENDED JOINT ATTENTION

3.1 PERCEPTION, ATTENTION AND CONTINUITY IN FILM

3.1.1 PERCEPTION IN FILM AND IN THE REAL WORLD

Since the beginning of film in the last years of the nineteenth century, there has been an interest on the functioning of this audiovisual medium at a psychological and cognitive level. Instances of this are found in the pioneering writings of Hugo Münsterberg (1916), in some of the psychological considerations of montage made by the early-century Soviet filmmakers (cf. Bordwell, 2013b), or in Rudolf Arnheim's thoughts on the relation between mind and film (apud Bordwell, 2013b; cf. also Eberwein, 1979: 60-70). However, it was not until the "naturalistic turn" (Bordwell, 2013b) in last century's 1980s that this theoretical approach to film was recovered and further developed. The semiological-psychoanalytic tradition that had dominated film studies up until then was confronted by different scholars who proposed new paths for studying film in an attempt to find some of the answers that the established tradition was not offering. This naturalistic turn (also called "cognitive turn") was basically "[an] effort to draw on evidence and research frameworks developed in domains of social science: psychology, but also linguistics, anthropology, and neuroscience. (...) [It] includes as well an experimental component" (Bordwell, 2013b: 47). Many film scholars turned from a tradition that privileged *interpretation* (cf. Carroll, 1996a) to a research path interested in how film works, that is, in *comprehension* or explanation (Bordwell, 1989a; 2013b).

Over the last years of the twentieth century, this research tradition (which has been labeled Cognitive Film Theory, although it is not a systematized program) experienced an ongoing growth that developed in different lines of inquiry and produced some significant

publications dealing with the cognitive and psychological dimensions of film (e.g. Bordwell, 1995 [1985]; Carroll, 1996b; Bordwell & Carroll, 1996). From then on, Cognitive Film Theory has kept expanding (cf. Bordwell, 2009a; Nannicelli & Taberham, 2014).

Film perception or, more broadly speaking, moving image perception is one of the subjects addressed by the cinematic cognitive trend. How do viewers actually perceive a motion picture? How is it that perceptual continuity emerges from a series of discontinuous units put together? Is there a particular kind of "cinematic perception", so to speak? Multiple studies from different perspectives have tackled this specific issue, but in general terms they side with two separate theoretical frames: that of J.J. Gibson's Direct Perception Theory (cf. Warren, 2010), on which "ecological" approaches to film are based (e.g. Anderson, 1996; Anderson & Anderson, 2005); and that of Inferential Theory of Perception or "constructive perception" (cf. Mack, 2010), which encompasses a variety of studies on cinematic perception (e.g. Hochberg & Brooks, 1996a, 1996b; Levin & Simons, 2000; Berliner & Cohen, 2011).

In general terms, the ecological perspective on film perception draws from the field of evolutionary and ecological psychology, and it essentially argues that our perceptual and cognitive capacities evolved to adapt to our natural environment. Those same capacities are the ones employed in film watching:

> the perception and comprehension of motion pictures is regarded as a subset of perception and comprehension in general, and the workings of the perceptual systems and the mind of the spectator are viewed in the context of their evolutionary development. (Anderson, 1996: 10)

On the other hand, the constructive approach makes the case that inferential processes play an important role in perception and cognition, thus opposing Direct Perception Theory's main claim that all the information we process "is there", in the real world, and we do not add anything to it or infer anything from the actual data (Anderson, 1996: 29).

However, in spite of the fundamental differences between both theories[10], there is a point of junction between them in that both contend that human beings perceive and experience films by means of the same processes and capacities with which they perceive the real world. It is not that our minds have developed special tools or abilities to understand films, but the other way round: through trial and error, film evolved to adapt to our minds. This idea is a recurring one in the research tradition of Cognitive Film Theory (e.g. Bordwell, 1989a, 2008, 2010; Messaris, 1994; Currie, 1995a; Anderson, 1996; Carroll, 1996b; Persson, 2003; Smith, 2012b; Smith et al., 2012b; Shimamura, 2013).

Nevertheless, that our experience of film is based on natural processes of real-world perception does not mean that films are exact copies of reality. Movies do not create a *cognitive* illusion of reality; that is, the viewer does not take the characters and events on the screen as if they were part of his present reality (see, for instance, Anderson, 1996; Carroll & Seeley, 2013). And although movies are built upon *perceptual* illusions (of movement, of continuity, etc.), they still differ from our ordinary perceptual reality[11]: the space they depict is discontinuous with our own, they do not represent the egocentric relative position of a viewer, and the viewer's point of view is constantly changed in a way that does not allow for a unified spatiotemporal perspective (cf. chapter 4) (Carroll & Seeley, 2013: 58).

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[10] The differences between these two theories of perception may not make them mutually exclusive: it could be that they match two distinct but complementary visual systems, the "ventral" and the "dorsal". As Norman (2000, 84) explains, "[t]he primary function of the ventral system is the recognition and identification of the visual input. Recognition and identification must depend on some comparison with some stored representation. In contrast, the primary function of the dorsal system is analysis of the visual input in order to allow visually guided behavior vis-à-vis the environment and objects in it (e.g., pointing, reaching, grasping, walking toward or through, climbing, etc.)". Norman (2000) further argues that the functioning of the ventral system parallels the constructivist approach to perception, while the dorsal system matches the ecological account, and thus he proposes a dual-process approach to visual perception that integrates both theories of perception into a single framework.

[11] Not all film scholars agree on this. Gregory Currie, for instance, argues that there is actual motion in film and not just a perceptual illusion of it (1995a: 28-47).

That is, movies deviate in a number of ways from real-world conditions of perception.

It has also been argued that film devices reproduce our mental processes in an analogical way (e.g. Münsterberg, 1916). Memory flashbacks, for instance, would mimic our way of remembering past events in real life. But this, however, is not true, as Carroll (1988a: 496) aptly points out:

> [i]f we remember something by means of an image, we entertain two percepts simultaneously, the memory image and the view of whatever is before our eyes. But flashbacks present images sequentially; they are phenomenologically disanalogous with imagistic memory. Perhaps, superimposition is more akin to such memory, though probably this is not quite right either.

Thus, films are neither exact imitations of reality nor formal mimicries of our mental processes. How is it then possible for viewers to understand them by employing the same perceptual and cognitive processes they use to experience the real world? The answer is that films are designed specifically to work in the viewer's mind, and so they appeal to all those everyday natural processes in order to make sense for the viewer: as Carroll and Seeley put it, "movies are *attentional engines* fine tuned to a range of natural cognitive and perceptual capacities" (2013: 58). Furthermore, it is precisely this natural cognitive basis of movies which accounts for their widespread accessibility and widespread intensity (Carroll & Seeley, 2013: 72).

Analyzing the similarities and differences between perception and attention in everyday life and in film, Carroll and Seeley (2013) propose a model to explain how films work as attentional engines. In real life, we do not perceive every single detail of a given situation or environment; we just perceive task-salient aspects, which may vary if our target task changes. How do we make that selection, how do we perceive just what is needed? Two main mechanisms are perceptual salience of certain features (bottom-up strategies) and biased competition models for selective attention (top-down processes which predispose our sensory systems to expect the most distinctive perceptual features for the task at hand, and which also inhibit

potentially distracting salient features). In addition, and as a consequence of this, visual routines are developed for common, everyday tasks (e.g. making sandwiches): they are "automated patterns of attention that seamlessly direct perception across space to just those diagnostic features[12] salient to each stage of a stereotyped behavior" (Carroll & Seeley, 2013: 65).

Now, what do all these everyday perception processes have to do with film? Cinematic discourse employs selective perception processes similar to those found in real-life situations. However, the selection between important features and distracting ones is not left in the viewer's hands, but it is done by the film itself:

> [t]heater design, the conventions of theater going, camera movements, lens movements, editing techniques, and the soundtrack are all means to enhance the perceptual salience of features diagnostic for the depictive, narrative, and artistic content of the film. (…) [Thus], a significant amount of the cognitive work necessary to perceive and understand a movie has already been done for us in the production process. (Carroll & Seeley, 2013: 61)

One of the main techniques for this selection in film is *variable framing*, which encompasses editing, camera movements (pans, tracks, etc.) and zoom effects. These devices are put to work in order to index, bracket and scale information (Carroll & Seeley, 2013: 62). Many times (but not always), variable framing approximates the functioning of everyday visual routines, but with an essential difference: in real-life visual routines there is a task being performed by the perceiving subject, while the film viewer is not doing anything (apart from watching the movie). At the most, the viewer is watching a character perform a particular task. In this sense, films are "externally imposed attentional scripts that capture a viewer's attention" (Carroll & Seeley, 2013: 65), and the activity of watching a film is based on the viewer's use of and cognitive capacity for visual routines. Nevertheless, not every cinematic sequence is modeled after

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[12] Features of objects and events become *diagnostic* when they function as "sets of sensory features sufficient to enable an organism to perceptually recognize the identity, shape, location, and affordances of objects and events in the environment" (Carroll & Seeley, 2013: 59).

a visual routine. In many cases, variable framing is simply used to lead the viewer's attention and help him follow the story: it shows us "exactly what we need to see just as we need it to carry on with the task of tracking the narrative" (Carroll & Seeley, 2013: 66) (cf. section 3.1.2).

Finally, Carroll and Seeley point out that perceptual salience of certain features is not enough to signal their diagnosticity in the filmic narrative. Two variables are needed in the process: the availability of salient stimulus features (as exposed above) and, most importantly, the narrative context into which the perceived features must be assimilated and accommodated. These processes of adjusting new information into the narrative context are developed upon narrative schemas, "attentional devices movie makers use to produce narrative expectations and to fill in the gaps in a spatiotemporally discontinuous, perceptually sparse narrative" (Carroll & Seeley, 2013: 67). The basis of these narrative schemas is folk psychology and the general knowledge of causal relations in the world. One of the strategies based on this kind of schemas is *erotetic narration*, a question-answer logic that guides the viewer through the narrative "by tacitly projecting the range of [narrative alternative] outcomes as subconscious expectations which we can represent as questions" (Carroll, 1988b: 173). Those questions and expectations are gradually answered and fulfilled through the narrative (but sometimes they are disappointed on purpose). Thus, diagnostic narrative elements are not just perceptually salient, but also pose or answer (fully or partially) a narrative question, and by doing so direct the viewer's attention to secure a proper understanding of the film.

Cinema, as an attentional engine conceived for the viewer's mind, draws on the spectator's natural cognitive abilities at different levels in order to ensure its own correct functioning. However, accepting this fundamental principle does not imply rejecting the level of convention in film discourse. Bordwell, an advocate of the naturalistic approach to film himself, specifies that

> [f]ilms use conventions. (...) [But] such conventions are mostly of the quickly learned variety. Many of them piggyback on our natural predispositions; others require only slight adjustments. (...) We

understand movies fairly easily because in many respects their conventions are easy to learn: they are simplifications of things we already know. (Bordwell, 2008: 79)

Bordwell argues for a concept of convention which is not equated to that of arbitrariness. Likewise, he states that nature should not be opposed to culture and convention (Bordwell, 2008: 60-61). In this sense, he describes a continuum of visual effects ranging from those based on sensory triggers and contingently universal factors up to those dependent upon more specific cultural skills that require a higher degree of learning. Midway in the scale there are visual effects which draw on cultural skills but which can be easily learned (e.g. dissolves, fades, etc.)[13] (Bordwell, 2008: 63-66). Usually, a given cinematic technique will be composed of elements from different points of this scale. The shot/reverse shot pattern[14], for instance, may be considered "as a composite phenomenon, drawing on features from various regions of the continuum" (Bordwell, 2008: 66). It is a device that calls upon a series of "contingent universals", such as a two-person, face-to-face encounter (a contingent universal for social interaction), conversational turn-taking, and glances/eyelines. These, in turn, serve to constrain and specify more particular but easily learned cinematic practices within the shot/reverse shot, such as the ¾ view, over-the-shoulder shots, or the constant changes of angle (Bordwell, 2008: 67-68).

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[13] A *dissolve* is "[a] transition between two shots during which the first image gradually disappears while the second image gradually appears: for a moment the two images blend in *superimposition*" (Bordwell & Thompson, 2008: 478), while a *fade* is a transition in which a shot gradually appears (*fade-in*) or disappears (*fade-out*) coming from or giving way to a dark, white or colored screen (Bordwell & Thompson, 2008: 478).

[14] A shot/reverse shot is an editing structure that consists of a minimum of two shots of two characters looking at each other, usually having a conversation. The first shot shows one of the characters, and the following (reverse) shot shows the other one. This pattern is usually repeated, and the shots of both characters are alternated (Bordwell & Thompson, 2008: 480).

The concept of "contingent universals"[15] is introduced by Bordwell to reconcile in some way the traditionally opposed ideas of nature and convention:

> [t]hey are contingent because they did not, for any metaphysical reasons, have to be the way they are; and they are universal insofar as we can find them to be widely present in human societies. They consist of practices and propensities that arise in and through human activities. The core assumption here is that given certain uniformities in the environment across cultures, humans have in their social activities faced comparable tasks in surviving and creating their ways of life. Neither wholly "natural" nor wholly "cultural", these sorts of contingent universals are good candidates for being at least partly responsible for the "naturalness" of artistic conventions. (Bordwell, 2008: 61)

Thus, conventions rarely respond to purely arbitrary reasons. Most cinematic conventions take a particular form in order to fit human predispositions (this is where contingent universals come in), and they also adopt specific means so as to conform to the pre-established goals (narrative, aesthetic, etc.) (Bordwell, 2008: 62-63). The point is that film discourse is neither fully natural nor purely conventional. It cannot be analyzed in black-or-white terms, from the perspective of a radical opposition between two poles. It is more of a nuanced matter, a question of degrees along a continuum.

An objection that could be raised against this argument, based on some experiments conducted with adult first-time film viewers, is that those viewers had difficulties understanding certain scenes in the films showed to them (Schwan & Ildirar, 2010; Ildirar & Schwan, 2015), thus suggesting that the knowledge of cinematic codes acquired via film experience may be required for film comprehension. However, another interesting fact that these and other experiments showed (e.g. Hobbs et al., 1988; Hobbs & Frost, 1989) is that adult first-time viewers of film found no obstacle in comprehending those

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[15] This notion should not be confused with that of "linguistic universals", which, as defined by Greenberg and others, are those properties that all natural languages share or those general statements that apply to all languages (cf. Greenberg, 2005; Matthews, 2014: 228).

scenes that depicted familiar events and places, whatever the cinematic techniques used. These results agree with the idea of film discourse being closely linked to our everyday reality in many respects, and push the idea of a conventional code into the background. The reason for the incomprehension of particular scenes by first-time viewers may be of a more basic nature: according to the results obtained by Ildirar and Schwan (2015: 148), "one important difference between first-time and experienced viewers may lie in their conception of the medium 'film'", since first-time viewers lack a primary notion of the medium. That is not to say that familiarity with cinematic discourse (i.e. exposure to film narratives) is an irrelevant factor in spectators' degree of film comprehension. It certainly does have an influence in the process, but it does not lie at the basis of it: the greatest weight does not fall upon knowledge of codes and conventions, but upon the viewer's natural cognitive and perceptual capacities. Even those cinematic devices which require learning, like the ones mentioned above (e.g. dissolves, fades, wipes, and so on), are usually easy to assimilate: definitely, they do not pose the learning complexity of other types of codes, such as verbal language.

Returning to the issue of film as an attentional engine, it is necessary to explain how cinema guides the viewer's attention relying on natural cognitive and perceptual processes. In this sense, the so-called "continuity system" plays a fundamental role. It is to this matter that I will turn to in the following section.

3.1.2   ATTENTION AND CONTINUITY IN FILM

In order to properly understand how continuity is constructed in film, it is first necessary to account for the way in which we attend to the real world and perceive continuity in it. Our impression of continuity in experiencing the world is not just an illusion, for the world itself is spatially and temporally continuous (cf. for example Cutting, 2005). However, this perceptual continuity is not the fruit of perceiving every single detail of a scene either (Levin & Simmons, 2000; Smith, 2012b; Fischer & Whitney, 2014). Knowing that the world is continuous, we assume this trait to be constant when we move around reality: there is an *a priori* assumption of continuity, without the need of evidence to prove it (Smith, 2012b: 11). This

inference of continuity is so strong that it prevails even in the face of inconsistent perceptual information, as experiments on "change blindness"[16] have demonstrated (cf. Simons & Levin, 1997; Levin & Simons, 2000). Also, in the act of perceiving our eyes perform both *fixations* and saccadic movements (*saccades*). During fixations the eyes are still and focused on a particular element of the scene, while saccades are jump movements that the eyes perform between fixations. We only capture information during fixations, although we also retain some details across saccades. Thus, a working memory version of the scene at hand is added to the information encoded during fixations, and the result is the perception of a continuous scene (Smith, 2012b: 11).

Our perception of continuity in film is not very different from these real-world perceptual processes, although a singular feature of film is that it builds continuity out of spatiotemporally discontinuous units (edited shots). One of the usual ways to achieve this continuity is to follow the rules of the "continuity system", which progressively took shape through trial and error during the first decades of film. This classical system, composed of a set of editing rules, has been defined in various ways but, as Smith points out (2012b: 10), the common characteristic underlined by most authors is that it creates "coherent space and continuous time", and, in more general terms, narrative continuity[17]. However, this spatiotemporal continuity is not

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[16] The term *change blindness* refers to "our inability to detect changes to objects and scenes from one view to the next", however striking those changes may be (Simons & Levin, 1997: 261). Furthermore, these changes may take place either during a saccadic eye movement (and so they are more easily ignored by the viewer) or in plain sight, when the viewer's gaze focuses on a specific object. In this case, the change can affect either the object to which the viewer pays attention (Levin & Simons, 1997; Smith et al., 2012a) or some peripheral element of the scene which is not the focus of attention (e.g. Levin & Simons, 1997).

[17] Not all film theorists sing the praises of the continuity editing style. André Bazin, for instance, argues in favor of the long shot (and its depth of field, as practiced for instance, by Orson Welles) over the edited sequence (which employs close-ups and other types of shots to direct the viewer's attention to details), for he finds the latter unnatural in the way it restricts the viewer's freedom of attention (Bazin, 1958: 143; cf. also Branigan, 1984: 200-202, and Reisz & Millar, 1975: 283-284).

inherent to the film itself, but rather a perceptual illusion of unity created in the viewer's mind: what continuity editing achieves is "continuity of viewer cognition" (Smith, 2012b: 5). A thorough explanation of the relationship between viewer and continuity in film is proposed by Smith (2012a, 2012b), who develops an *Attentional Theory of Cinematic Continuity* (AToCC). Basically, this theory argues that

> [e]diting a scene in a way that allows the perception of "continuity" is not about enabling the construction of a detailed spatiotemporal representation, (…) [but] about enabling the viewer to shift their attention to the audiovisual details currently relevant to them and the narrative. (Smith, 2012b: 15)

This approach has many points in common with Carroll and Seeley's (2013) analysis of film as an attentional engine, discussed above (cf. section 3.1.1). Both Smith and Carroll and Seeley argue that the viewer does not need as many details as possible in order to make sense of a scene. Rather, he just needs his attention to be directed towards the essential information while he navigates the narrative guided by expectations which are gradually created and fulfilled (or which are failed to be met deliberately). Specifically, AToCC proposes a three-step process to explain how attentional continuity emerges from a series of discontinuous units (i.e. film shots). Those three stages are: attending to a shot, cuing attention pre-cut (by employing cues such as gazes, conversational turns, off-screen sounds motion, and so on), and matching expectations post-cut (Smith, 2012b: 5). A viewer's attention to a shot is usually *overt* (that is, focused on that element of the shot being attended), which is opposed to *covert* attention (i.e. seeing something out of the corner of one's eye) (Smith, 2012b: 17-18). The second stage is cuing attention across a cut: once attention is fixated, if an unexpected cut occurs discontinuity will be perceived. In order to minimize the viewer's awareness of discontinuity, the cut must coincide with a shift of the viewer's attention, which is triggered by attentional cues like the ones mentioned above (Smith, 2012b: 15). This shift in attention goes hand in hand with emerging expectations (many times elicited by perceptual inquiries: e.g. what is the character looking at?), which may or may not be fulfilled after the cut (Smith, 2012b: 20). However, Smith

(2012b: 21) makes clear that the cut does not occur in a moment of suppressed attention, but at a point where attention is preparing to shift somewhere else. Finally, the third stage is that of matching minimal expectations after the cut: if expectations are satisfied, the cut will be successfully bridged and the viewer will have a sense of continuity (Smith, 2012b: 29).

This process of attentional continuity is present in most flashback scenes to bridge the viewer's attention from the narrative present to the past. How is this possible, if flashbacks necessarily imply a temporal discontinuity (and usually a spatial one too)? Smith clarifies that "the three stages of AToCC presented in relation to spatiotemporal continuity (…) also operate across cuts with action and narrative continuity" (2012a: 10). I argue that the continuity perceived in a given flashback transition is of a narrative nature, and it prevails over the (spatio)temporal discontinuity that a retrospection scene implies. They key for bridging past and present are the attentional cues that the flashback offers to the viewer, which contribute to create the abovementioned continuity of viewer cognition.

Let us see a flashback example to illustrate how the viewer's attention is cued and narrative continuity is maintained. *The Help* (2011) tells the story of young journalist Skeeter Phelan and a group of African American maids in the 1960s, during the civil rights movement. By writing a book with the maids' testimonies about the hardships in their daily work, Skeeter condemns publicly the way white families treat them, and helps them fight for their rights. Early in the film, a flashback shows an episode from Skeeter's teenage years (00:23:10-00:26:00) (see section 3.2.2 for a complete analysis of the scene). The flashback is cued in the narrative present by Skeeter's gaze towards a bench under a tree, which is the object that ultimately triggers the recollection. As Figure 1 shows, the scene combines shots of Skeeter and the bench she is looking at according to a point-of-view (POV) pattern (cf. chapter 4, section 4.2.5): a medium shot of Skeeter looking off-screen (a) is followed by a shot of an empty bench (b), which is in front of her, and then a third shot goes back to Skeeter (c), still looking off-screen. When the bench is shown again

(d), it is now occupied by the protagonist's younger self: the leap to the past has taken place, cued by the character's look and a POV structure.

a)

b)

c)

d)

Figure 1. Skeeter's flashback in *The Help* (2011)

In the first shot, the viewer's attention is focused on Skeeter (overt attention), but at the same time his attention is covertly directed off-screen by Skeeter's gaze. A perceptual inquiry emerges ("what is she looking at?") and expectations are created regarding the object of the protagonist's look (Smith, 2012b: 27). Thus, the main attentional cue in shot (a) is Skeeter's gaze, which covertly directs the viewer's attention off-screen, expecting to see the target object of that gaze. When the object is shown (b), the "eyeline match"[18] is completed and the viewer's expectations are satisfied. The POV structure is then

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[18] An *eyeline match* is a classic film technique which contributes to the continuity system, and which consists of the combination of at least a shot of a character looking at a certain point off-screen and a shot of an object (or another character) towards which the first person looks (Bordwell & Thompson, 2008: 478). Eyeline matches are a fundamental element of POV shots.

repeated (c, d), and the viewer's attention is cued again. The only difference this second time is that the object of Skeeter's look (d) introduces a narrative leap to the past. The viewer's expectations are slightly disrupted, because he would naturally expect to see the bench in the present again. He thus enters into "active reconstruction mode", looking for evidence in the new shot that allows perceiving *a posteriori* continuity (Smith, 2012b: 16, 28). That evidence is provided by the causal connection that exists between Skeeter's look and the second shot of the bench: the protagonist is in the present remembering the past, and the scene that ensues is the object of her recollection. Other elements contribute to build *a posteriori* continuity as well, such as the extradiegetic background music and the narrative context (in the scene preceding this one, the girl has an argument with her mother concerning her childhood maid, and it is precisely that maid whom Skeeter remembers in the flashback).

All in all, the scene is narratively continuous because, first, it is built upon attentional cues that contribute to the continuity of viewer cognition (in this case, those devices are fundamental elements of the continuity system: gazes, eyeline matches and POV shots). And second, narrative continuity is achieved by placing the scene in the film's narrative context. In this process narrative schemas and the question-answer logic of erotetic narration come into play (Carroll & Seeley, 2013) (cf. section 3.1.1). The flashback scene fills certain narrative gaps, and by answering specific questions (e.g. what was the role that the maid played in Skeeter's childhood and adolescence), as well as posing some new ones, and also by fulfilling expectations, it contributes to narrative continuity. The role context plays in the understanding of movie shots and scenes is actually of great importance. Cinematic cues are not enough, as the analysis of this flashback shows, and even the same filmic transition (e.g. a dissolve) may be understood in different ways depending on the narrative context (the dissolve, for instance, can be employed to link two shots or, by contrast, to mark a separation between them) (Messaris, 1994: 105-106; cf. also Salt, 1992: 40). In line with this, Messaris (1994: 18-19) notes that films have progressively suppressed "overloaded" transitions and explicit explanatory devices (e.g. the blurring of the

image to introduce a flashback) and have instead shifted that explanatory load onto the context (cf. section 3.3.2).

However, attentional cues and narrative context are not sufficient in themselves to account for the viewer's understanding of movie flashbacks: they work alongside many other elements in a conceptual integration network that is progressively constructed for a given cinematic narration. A fundamental concept which comes into play at this point, and which emerged from the application of the Blending framework to the cognitive analysis of narratives, is that of *narrative space*. The particular notion of narrative (mental) spaces we take here was formulated by Dancygier (e.g. 2005, 2008, 2012b), who defines them as a type of "mental spaces which require more elaboration and structure, as well as extended maintenance, and which participate in the process of story construction" (Dancygier, 2008: 54). Each space has its own topology and participants, and is set up and progressively elaborated throughout the narrative. This is done by means of linguistic forms in the case of literary narratives, but in the case of film there are also other modalities that contribute to the construction of narrative spaces: shapes, colors, light, types of shots, music, sound effects, etc. (cf. chapter 4, section 4.1.2). Thus, the abovementioned film strategies that build narrative continuity take part in a broader system which consists of a number of narrative mental spaces integrated in a particular conceptual network that is specifically set up in every act of watching a film.

The following section will elaborate on the functioning of film flashbacks in terms of joint attention and conceptual integration (i.e. blended joint attention) in order to explain how flashback scenes operate at the level of narrative mental spaces, and it will also show how the viewer understands the flashback as a new narrative space that belongs to the past in the story.

3.2 BLENDED JOINT ATTENTION IN FILM

3.2.1   JOINT ATTENTION AND BLENDING THEORY

The continuity of viewer cognition achieved by cuing the viewer's attention (AToCC theory, explained above) is closely linked to a natural kind of human behavior: that of jointly attending to something with someone else (either following of directing that someone's attention). More specifically, a scene of "classic joint attention" is a situation in which two individuals sharing spatiotemporal coordinates ("here" and "now") attend simultaneously to a third element when one of the participants calls attention to a near object or points out something about it. But shared attention is not enough: there must be "common and interactive attention" of all the participants (Thomas & Turner, 2011: 190); they must *know together* that they are focused on the same element (Carpenter & Call, 2013: 50). There is communication about that specific object of attention, although the process may be nonverbal (cf. Tomasello & Farrar, 1986).

Many of our everyday activities involve processes of joint attention (e.g. going to the grocery store and talking to the shop assistant about a specific product we are interested in), but also most of those daily activities, although based on a scene of classic joint attention, transcend that "here" and "now" scene. Take, for instance, the nowadays common activity of having a conversation through text messages. At least two people are talking to each other, paying attention to the same thing (the written messages shown on the cell phone screen, and their content) and communicating about certain matters. But, as obvious as this classical joint attention scene may seem, its simplicity is only apparent. These two people are not speaking face to face, sharing time and space coordinates. They may even be miles apart, and one may read the other's message several hours after it was written. Yet, they are capable of engaging in an activity that requires jointly attending to an object, even if it is a non-physical one, like their topic of conversation. How does this work, cognitively speaking?

In the seemingly simple activity of text messaging there are many different packets or sets of meaning involved, and with which our mind works in the process of talking through text messages. The idea of jointly attending to something is just one of the ingredients in a complex mental operation of *conceptual integration*. This process consists on combining different meanings in order to come up with a new one, and it is a mental activity which human beings carry out non-consciously and which is a fundamental part of almost everything we think, say and do. It is, Blending Theory argues, the way to explain how human beings think (Fauconnier & Turner, 2002). This ability for conceptual blending relies on different mental capacities which human beings share with other mammals, such as attention, memory, and perception, but these are not sufficient on their own to explain how we come up with new and complex meanings (Turner, 2014: 57). Blending Theory proposes a hypothetical explanation of how human beings cognitively deal with a variety of phenomena. Many situations in everyday life, like text messaging, call for the activation of several *mental spaces*, "small conceptual packets constructed as we think and talk, for purposes of local understanding and action" (Fauconnier & Turner, 2002: 40). These sets of meaning are then projected into a single new mental space (a *blended space*) that integrates elements from all the input mental spaces of meaning (fundamentally through processes of *compression*[19]). Those projections are selective, meaning that not all the content from every mental space is transferred to the blend. Also, there are meanings that emerge in the resulting blended space which were not present in any of the input mental spaces.

In the process of having a text message conversation a variety of mental spaces are activated and put to work. There is, to start with, the model of a local classic scene of joint attention (taking place here and now) which serves as the ground for this other communicative situation that takes place beyond here and now (Thomas & Turner, 2011: 189-200). It is because we have the experience of local and

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[19] *Compression* operations consist of "transforming diffuse and distended conceptual structures that are less congenial to human understanding so that they become more congenial to human understanding" (Turner, 2006: 18). Processes of compression as related to viewpoint, time and identity will be analyzed in detail in chapters 4 and 5.

immediate joint attention that we can "project" it to other experiences which are not local, not so familiar. Also, the basic concept of face-to-face conversation needs to be projected to the blended space in order to make sense of the text message conversation, which does not occur face to face. But these basic, simple sets of meaning (ideas such as here and now, face-to-face conversation, and classic joint attention) are not enough. There are also complex sets of meaning which need to be projected to the blended space as well. They are complex because, even though they are easy to understand for us, they surpass the here and now coordinates: two people in two different places and moments in time, two different points of view, the ability to acknowledge and adopt someone else's viewpoint, and so on. All those mental spaces are integrated, brought together, and the result is a new set of meaning, a new mental space (the *blend*) which is anchored in a local scene of joint attention, but which goes beyond that. It is a space of *blended joint attention*, and only in it and from it the text message conversation makes sense to us, because in the blend the complex network of mental spaces that is activated in the process gets compressed and thus is made available to our minds.

It must be made clear, however, that these kinds of mental operations are not extraordinary processes which our minds need to use on certain occasions that involve particularly complex meanings. In fact, our thinking is always complex, but since we only see the surface of it (its products and not its working mechanisms) we have the impression of simplicity. The truth is that we are constantly integrating different concepts, different mental spaces of meaning in order to come up with new meanings that conform new conceptual spaces. One last example will serve to illustrate the pervasiveness of blending processes. Let us consider a simple counterfactual statement of the "If I were…" kind. Take, for instance, the following sentence, said by a professor to one of his younger colleagues: "If I were you I'd be working on finishing my book". There are at least two main inputs, one for each of the professors, and they are projected into the blended space. In it, some selected features of the two persons are integrated: there is the situation of the younger professor, who needs to publish a book in order to attain a position; and there is also the attitude and experience of the senior professor (Grady et al., 1999:

119). Features of "I" and features of "you" are projected, and it is only inside the new blended space that the sentence can be spoken and understood, for only in it the two viewpoints are blended, and result in a new perspective which combines both professors. Thus, only in the blend is the meaning of the counterfactual statement made available to our minds: it integrates all the relevant information needed to comprehend the statement, but it also presents it in a way simple enough for our minds to grasp its content.

Conceptual integration processes are essential in almost every thought, utterance and activity that we develop. Thus, it should not be surprising that these mental operations are also fundamental in our understanding of cinematic discourse. The aim of the next section is to show that an integration process of *blended joint attention* is essential for the comprehension of film in general, and to understand movie flashbacks in particular.

3.2.2   FILM, THE CONTINUITY SYSTEM AND BLENDED JOINT ATTENTION

As it was explained above in the description of AToCC theory, the continuity system evolved in film to adapt to the viewers' minds, and one of the achievements of that adaptation is continuity of viewer cognition. That continuity perceived by the viewer while watching a film is possible, among other things, because of the close relationship that exists between the viewer's attention being guided (as AToCC explains) and human beings' natural capacity for joint attention. In order to show the general functioning of film in terms of *blended joint attention*, the flashback scene from *The Help* (2011) discussed above (cf. section 3.1.2) will be re-analyzed from this new perspective. First it will serve to illustrate that blended joint attention is at work since before the introduction of the flashback, and that the same cognitive process is at the basis of film watching in general. Secondly, the leap to the past in this scene will further serve to explain cinematic retrospection as a case of blended joint attention.

As exposed in section 3.1.2 above, the flashback under consideration (00:23:10-00:26:00) is introduced after Skeeter learns

that her mother dismissed their lifelong maid Constantine. After arguing with her mother, and visibly upset, Skeeter leaves the house and crosses the backyard. That is when the sight of an empty bench makes her remember a conversation she had with Constantine right there, a few years ago. As Figure 1 shows, point-of-view editing is employed in the scene to indicate the object of Skeeter's attention in the present: in shot (a) we see the protagonist herself, then we observe the bench adopting Skeeter's point of view (b), and finally we return to Skeeter (c), although we see her from a different optical perspective than in (a). Thus, the combination of shots (a), (b) and (c) builds an "eyeline match" structure, a classic film technique which contributes to the continuity system. The eyeline match schema is a fundamental component of the point-of-view (POV) shot as defined by Branigan (1984): a combination of shot A (point/glance), showing the character's face and gaze direction, and shot B (point/object), which shows the object the character is looking at (see chapter 4, section 4.2.5, for an in-depth account of the POV shot). Thus, in the point/object shot the viewer adopts the character's perspective (although he does not necessarily take the character's precise optical vantage point). Ultimately, the eyeline match is the basis upon which the flashback in *The Help* is built, for the next shot (d) which shows what Skeeter is looking at is already an image of the past, and it is Skeeter herself who is sitting on the bench, though the scene took place some years earlier.

Furthermore, as it has been announced above, what lies beneath this conventional editing structure, and therefore beneath the construction of the flashback analyzed is a scene of classic joint attention. Oakley and Tobin (2012: 73) state that "all the standard devices of continuity editing are endowed with the logic of joint attention", and this also seems to be the case of the eyeline match technique, for the viewer follows the character's gaze, and both subjects end up taking notice of the same object (the bench). However, this interpretation poses a problem if we take a closer look at the flashback scene and at the concept of joint attention. It is true that both Skeeter and the viewer pay attention to the same element, but one of the main features of joint attention is not present: the character is not aware of that shared attention, and she does not

intend to share anything with the viewer (cf. Tobin, 2008: 24-28). Therefore, the attentional triangle in this case cannot be formed by the viewer, the character, and the object. But, since it is clear that the flashback is based on an eyeline match structure, and that a joint attention logic underlies this kind of construction, the necessary attentional triangle must consist of other components, namely the camera, the viewer, and the object observed (Skeeter first, and then the bench). It is the camera eye and the viewer who pay attention to the same thing; the camera guides (and controls significantly) the viewer's gaze, and thus, by paying attention to a certain object, they are both engaged in a goal-directed activity (and they are conscious of it)[20] (Oakley & Tobin, 2012). Nevertheless, the logic of joint attention in film is not exactly that of real-life joint attention: in the latter, participants can usually change location and viewpoint at will, looking back and forth between the other participant and the object observed, while cinematic joint attention restricts the viewer's movements and forces him to submit to the camera's (e.g. in *The Help*, we cannot look back at Skeeter whenever we want to) (cf. Persson, 2003: 74).

Even though the character (Skeeter) is not one of the subjects part of the joint-attentional triangle, her gaze being directed somewhere off-screen also plays an important part in the construction of the flashback. Human beings naturally tend to follow one another's gaze in order to see what somebody else is looking at (cf. Tomasello, 1999). Thus, this seemingly universal feature constitutes the perfect basis for the eyeline match/point-of-view (POV) structure[21]. This is precisely what Carroll (1996b: 128) is pointing at when he affirms that "we might think of point-of-view editing as an automatization, via editing, of our own natural perceptual reaction to track a glance to its

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[20] Of course, the camera's "consciousness" is not an inherent attribute of the artifact, but, as will be explained below, it is a quality that emerges in a blended space as a result of integrating the various decisions made by a filmmaking crew with respect to camera operations.
[21] In fact, the eyeline match itself would be inconceivable without our natural capacity for gaze following. It is because we are born with this ability (at least with that potential capacity, which is developed in our first months of life; cf., for instance, Tomasello et al., 2007) that the eyeline match makes sense in film language. Gaze following is not just of some help in the eyeline match device, but essential to it.

target" (cf. chapter 4, section 4.2.5). The viewer, always guided by the camera, follows the character's gaze and reaches the object being looked at (which is in fact "given" to him by the camera, although the viewer may feel to be completing by himself a totally natural process). But the film technique goes even further, for, as Carroll states (1996b: 129), in point-of-view editing our gaze-following tendency goes beyond its information-gathering purpose and it is used as a communicative device. Although the character in question (Skeeter, in this case) does not take part in a joint-attentional triangle, her gaze is intentionally communicative because the camera (the filmmaker and his crew) has decided to use it for that aim, and it directs the viewer's attention to an object of importance in the story (the bench), which is in fact the object that will introduce the flashback.

While a joint attention scene makes up the backbone of the flashback in *The Help*, joint attention is not all there is to it. A closer look at the scene reveals that it does not meet the conditions of direct joint attention: classic joint attention takes place "here" and "now", whereas the components of the joint-attention triangle in the flashback scene (the viewer, the camera, and the character and object in the film) are not present in the same place and time. That is why this flashback (in fact every flashback, as will be explained below) should be analyzed as a case of *blended joint attention*.

Oakley and Tobin (2012) (see also Oakley, 2003) identify four defined mental spaces which configure the conceptual integration network that is activated in the mind every time a movie is watched: the Presentation space, which involves all those elements related to film production and to the way movies tell stories, including the camera's gaze guiding the viewer (2012: 66); the Reference space, which refers to the diegesis, the story world shown on the screen (2012: 66); and the Virtual space, which issues from the integration of the Presentation and the Reference spaces (2012: 67). Those three spaces shape a conceptual integration network which emerges from and in turn affects the Ground, defined as "the ontological status of the relevant actors in a film-viewing scenario" (2012: 65). More specifically, "[t]he filmic version of grounding space consists of a spectator, a screening room, and a film [being projected]" (Oakley,

2003: 18). The joint-attention triangle that constitutes the basis of the flashback scene in *The Help* is composed of elements from these four mental spaces: the viewer belongs to the Ground; the camera guiding the viewer by using different techniques (close-ups, eyeline matches, POV shots, and so on) is part of the Presentation space; and, finally, the characters and the objects towards which the viewer's attention is directed belong to the Reference space. The integration of the story told with the cinematic techniques employed (e.g. Skeeter stopping and remembering in front of the bench, and this being told using eyeline matches and POV editing) results in the Virtual space.

All those spaces contain such an enormous amount of information that it is not possible to process all of it at once. Also, not all that information is necessary for us to understand the flashback scene in terms of joint attention. Only a selection of relevant inputs from each space needs to be projected into a single, blended space, in which the meaning of the flashback emerges and is made accessible to our minds. Basically, the viewer's attention and act of watching is projected from the Ground; the camera's gaze, directing the viewer, is added from the Presentation space; the fictional world displayed on the screen (with the characters and their actions, emotions, etc.) is projected from the Reference space; and finally and most importantly, a classic joint-attention schema in its simplest form is needed to understand this vast mental network. All these inputs are blended into a mental space of *blended joint attention*. Without this cognitive operation, it would be impossible to merge such diverse mental spaces and to make sense of them, and so the flashback scene would be unintelligible. Blended joint attention operates in such a way as to create a human-scale joint attention scene whose components do not share time and space coordinates, and do not even have the same ontological nature.

Some of the inputs projected to the blended mental space are products of a blend in themselves. That is the case of the viewer, a figure which brings together all the possible actual viewers a film can have. The common characteristics of all those spectators are projected to the blend (those features relevant in a film-viewing scenario), and as a result the general notion of a viewer emerges, one

that can be in turn projected as an input in a new blend. In these terms, it is possible to speak of the viewer's role in the joint-attention triangle without the need to test how a group of particular viewers watch a flashback.

The camera as one of the components of the joint-attention triangle is also the product of a blend. We think of it as a conscious agent that controls what the viewer sees, but actually such an intelligence only exists inside a blend. The idea of the camera as an independent subjectivity is the result of combining a variety of participants and their decisions in the movie-production field regarding camera operations. All those individuals' decisions are blended into one single abstract agent that we call "the camera" (Oakley and Tobin, 2012: 62). And the camera as the product of a blend serves in turn as one of the inputs for the blended-joint-attention space.

Furthermore, as the viewer, the camera and the story world are projected into the blended space of joint attention, three different perspectives are projected and merged in it as well (cf. chapter 4, section 4.3.1). The viewer's point of view is always forced to align itself with the camera's perspective (otherwise, if he refuses to do so, he loses his position as spectator), and so these two input elements are integrated into one in the blended space. But this does not mean that in the blend the viewer's viewpoint disappears, subsumed by the camera's. Both perspectives are merged in the blend, but at the same time they are always distinguishable, and they need each other. The camera's reason for being lies in guiding someone's attention, and, on the other hand, the viewer cannot be so without a camera showing him the way along the story. An additional perspective, that of the character, is introduced in the POV shot when the eyeline match structure is closed with the image of an object. In the example from *The Help*, the first shot of every eyeline match (shots (a) and (c)) shows Skeeter from an "external" position, and then the camera and the viewer join her optical perspective in shots (b) and (d). However, this is not the case with every film flashback, as will be explained later: some retrospection scenes do not involve a character recalling past events, and so in those cases the perspective of a character may not

be available and merged with the viewer's and the camera's point of view.

In light of all this, and as will be further shown in the following pages, blended joint attention must be considered a fundamental cognitive process in the activity of watching a film. Essentially, the "deal" in film watching consists on the viewer submitting himself to the camera's control, letting the camera direct his attention (this is in fact an indispensable condition for actually being a film spectator). But it is only in the blended space of joint attention where the camera and the viewer can jointly attend to the story world of the film (and ultimately to the film as a whole, which results from the integration of the Presentation and Reference spaces into the Virtual space). Most importantly, this cognitive operation is not like the icing on the cake, but an all-important process which lies at the heart of film watching, so much so that without it the mere idea of watching a film could not be conceived.

Certainly, this process of blended joint attention is also active in film flashbacks, as the above example from *The Help* shows and as other cases analyzed later will also demonstrate. The scene employs continuity system techniques (eyeline match, POV shot) which contribute to establish an attentional triangle between camera, viewer, and character/object observed (Skeeter/the bench), and which ultimately leads the way to the narrative space of the past. On the other hand, the involvement of the character in the joint attention triangle varies from one flashback to another: sometimes the character's attention is *parallel* to that of the camera and the viewer[22], and not joint (cf. Carpenter & Call, 2013: 50), as is the case with Skeeter in *The Help*, but some other times the character takes part in the triangle and jointly attends with the viewer and the camera. Variations regarding blended joint attention in flashbacks will be addressed in the following section.

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[22] In these kinds of flashbacks, where the viewer has access to the character's recollections but the character is unaware of it, it is as if the narration were "letting us eavesdrop on the character's memory" (Bordwell, 1995 [1985]: 79).

3.2.3   BLENDED JOINT ATTENTION IN FLASHBACKS

Once explained the centrality of blended joint attention in the functioning of film, I will now turn specifically to analyze the same phenomenon in flashback scenes. Apart from elaborating on what has already been noted above, the analysis will be extended to different types of flashbacks. In general terms, a distinction can be made between memory and non-memory flashbacks (the former are the most common ones, according to Bordwell, 1995 [1985]: 78). But these can further be classified into three different kinds depending on the joint attention triangle they are based on: non-memory flashbacks are built upon the camera-viewer attentional triangle, while memory flashbacks add the character in two possible ways, either jointly attending with the camera and the viewer or attending in parallel to them[23].

In non-memory flashbacks, the camera directs the viewer's attention towards the specific cue that marks the transition to the past narrative space. The typical transition in these flashbacks is an insert title of the "5 years earlier" kind. I will return to these kinds of flashbacks later, in the segment devoted to the construction of the past narrative space (section 3.3).

Memory flashbacks, on the other hand, are much meatier from a blended joint attention perspective because of the role characters perform in them. I will first focus on those memory flashbacks in which the character's attention is parallel, not joint, like the one in *The Help*. The analysis of two more flashback scenes of this kind (from *Big Fish* (2003) and *Ordinary People* (1980)) will show again that blended

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[23] Some memory flashbacks show "indirect" memories: that is, a character tells another character about some past events which he did not actually witness, but which he knows because he has been told about them, and it is those "reported" memories that are shown in the flashback (the narrator is an intra-heterodiegetic one; cf. chapter 4, section 4.1.2). In this case, the characters in the scene jointly attend to the telling of the past, but their attention is parallel to that of the camera and the viewer (as long as they do not address the viewer directly: in that case attention would be joint). In *Ever After* (1998), for instance, the Grand Dame tells the Grimm brothers the story of her great-great-grandmother, the real Cinderella, and her narration is enacted in a flashback that spans the whole film.

joint attention is the cognitive process that lies at the base of any retrospection scene, and it will further prove that this shared basis is not a constricting element, but rather the cornerstone for creativity.

One of the flashbacks in *Big Fish* (2003) employs a very similar mechanism to that seen in *The Help*. The film narrates Ed Bloom's life, which he tells as being full of adventures and uncommon events. But his son, Will, does not really believe all the stories his father has been telling him about his childhood and youth. When Ed gets seriously ill and is close to death, Will seizes his final opportunity to discover the truth about his father's life.

While flying with his wife from Paris to his hometown in Alabama, Will is very quiet and pensive (00:08:25-00:08:55). From what we already know about the story, we can infer that he is rather concerned about his relationship with his father. He looks at the hand shadows that a child nearby is making, and this moves him to recall his own father projecting hand shadows for him, many years ago, while telling him bedtime stories. As Figure 2 shows, there is first a long shot with Will in the background and, in the foreground, the child he is looking at (a). There is an eyeline match within this shot already. We then see a medium shot of the kid making hand shadows, but the perspective is different: it is as if we were seeing him from Will's position (b). The following shot is a close-up of Will, his gaze directed off-screen (c); the camera zooms in slightly. Shot (d) is a big close-up of the kid's hands, also with a zoom-in, and (e) is another close-up of Will's face and look (zooming in), thus closing the eyeline match structure. Then, the shot following this last close-up of Will takes us directly to the past (f): although it also shows a shadow projected with hands, it is a different one and it belongs to a previous moment in the story.

While this scene and the one from *The Help* share essentially the same structure, there are some meaningful variations in *Big Fish* which should be considered. First, the eyeline match structure is repeated: instead of using the basic schema of a "character shot" plus an "object shot" (as is the case with *The Help*), the scene starts with a long shot (a) which already displays an eyeline match, and which functions as the "character shot" for the object in (b). Then, there is

another eyeline match between shots (c) and (d), and finally the last one between (e) and (f); with this last shot the leap to the past is introduced.
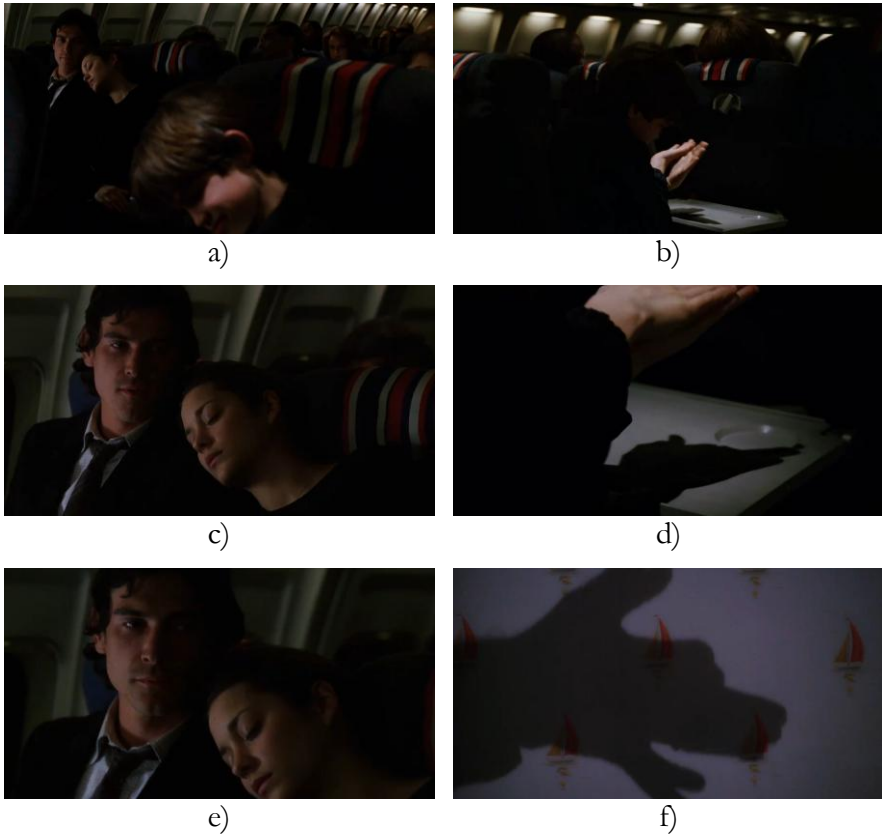
Figure 2. Will's flashback in *Big Fish* (2003)

The question is: why does *Big Fish* repeat the eyeline match structure, if a single pairing of the character and the object is enough to understand the sequence (as *The Help* shows)? What is it trying to reinforce? A possible explanation comes by taking also into account that the camera keeps zooming in both when it shows Will's face and the hand shadows (shots (c), (d) and (e)). Will's close-ups in (c) and (e) are progressively narrowed down to his face, thus bringing the

viewer closer to the character and his experience. On the other hand, the zoom upon the kid's hands (d) should be interpreted as being shown from Will's perspective. Obviously, Will is not getting physically closer to the kid, and he cannot zoom with his eyes, but what this effect (alongside the repetition of the eyeline match) is trying to represent is Will's mental state: concentrated and focused on a very particular aspect of his surroundings, he is progressively "taken" by his memories, which are prompted by that external object calling his attention. By employing both a repetition of the eyeline match and a zoom-in effect, the scene underlines the character's experience and state of mind. The subjectivity of the scene is enhanced by using those particular poetic resources (see chapter 4, section 4.3.2 for a deeper account of the role of the zoom in flashback introductions).

Also, as it is the case with the flashback in *The Help*, a joint attention structure lies behind this flashback scene, again with the camera, the viewer, and the object observed (first Will, then the hand shadows) setting up the joint-attentional triangle. Will's gaze directed off-screen is important as well, just as Skeeter's, for it guides the viewer's attention towards the kid's hands and, ultimately, towards an episode in the past. Thus, although Will does not participate in the joint attention triangle as an observer (joining the viewer and the camera, that is), the parallel attention established with him is essential for the camera and the viewer "eavesdropping" on his memories of the past.

Because cinema is a type of multimodal discourse, that is, one that involves different modalities in its construction, sound plays also an important role in it, and not just that of accompanying or complementing images. Just as a visual cue is the prompt to introduce the flashback in *The Help* and *Big Fish*, we will now look at an example from *Ordinary People* (1980) where the flashback is introduced by a sound cue.

Ordinary People narrates the disintegration of an upper-middle-class American family after the death of their eldest son in a sailing accident. The youngest son, Conrad, who was with his brother in the

boat but survived the accident, is overcome by grief and guilt, and even attempts suicide. Throughout the film, various memories about his brother (Buck) come to his mind, and most dramatically the memories of the accident.

In one particular scene (00:43:20-00:44:55), Conrad arrives home and offers to help his mother, Beth, who is setting the table. He tries to have a meaningful conversation with her, but she avoids it. Then the phone rings, and the mother answers. She laughs at what her friend says, and this laugh makes Conrad remember some happy moments both with his mother and his older brother. As Figure 3 shows, we see Beth in a close-up shot, in the foreground, while Conrad stays in the background of the frame, looking at her (a): again, as it was the case with *Big Fish*, an eyeline match is already established within this shot. The following shot (b) is a medium shot of Conrad looking off-screen, first in his mother's direction (b1), then somewhere else to his left (b2). The cut from shot (a) to shot (b) comes when Beth starts laughing while on her conversation, thus moving the viewer's attention from her talking to Conrad listening to her. Then, while Conrad turns his gaze somewhere else, the mother's laugh grows louder and is progressively perceived with an echo effect, and it continues when the scene from the past (shot c) is introduced. Conrad recalls his mother and his brother laughing openly, while he just looks at them within the same past space (voices are echoed throughout the scene).

As was the case with *The Help* and *Big Fish*, the retrospection in this scene is based on a joint-attention schema and on a series of eyeline matches. Shot (a) functions as an establishing shot, for it contains the eyeline match upon which the flashback is built: Conrad, as the character that looks, observes his mother, who is the "object" being looked at (and listened to). When she starts laughing, there is a cut to shot (b1), a medium shot of Conrad looking in his mother's direction. He keeps this position very briefly, and then looks somewhere else to his side (b2). Beth's laugh is heard throughout these two shots, and so the object of Conrad's attention (now only represented with sound, but this supported by Conrad's off-screen look towards his mother) is included within the medium shot of the character. Shot (b2) works

also as the character shot for the eyeline match established with shot (c). Beth's laugh is still the object of Conrad's attention, and its progressive echoing serves as a transition to the past scene in shot (c).

a)

b1)

b2)

c)
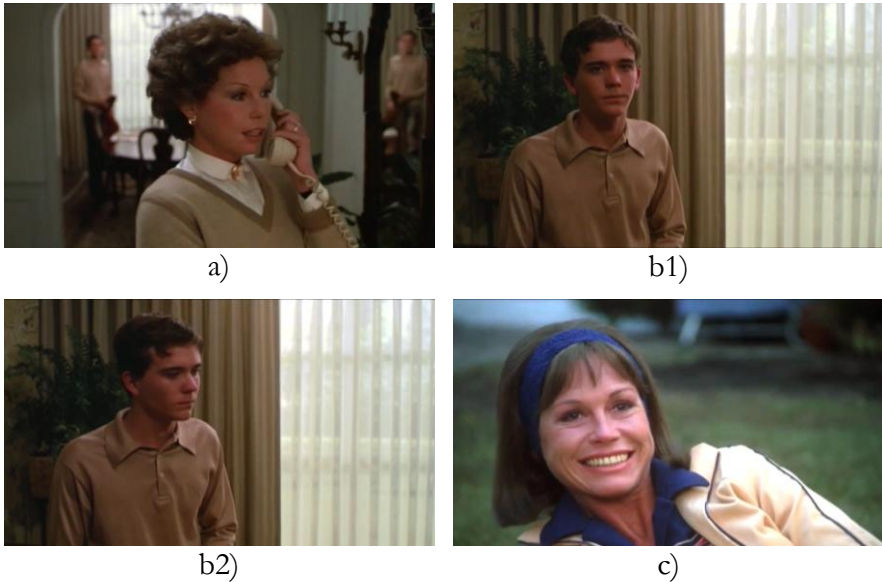
Figure 3. Conrad's flashback in *Ordinary People* (1980)

It is interesting to note how Conrad's gaze changes its direction within shot (b). Is it just an arbitrary change or a meaningful one? Conrad's look in (b1) is directed towards his mother, and we know that because the eyeline match has already been established within shot (a). But, as soon as Beth starts laughing, Conrad turns his eyes away from her and, with a somewhat lifeless gaze, looks to his left (b2). The laugh he is hearing provokes in him a turn in his attention, which goes from his mother laughing in the present time to a recollection of a past event. Conrad turns his gaze away (b2) because the laugh that now catches his attention is no longer the one from the present, but a different one that he recalls from some time ago. This change in the character's gaze direction is a communicative strategy which tells the viewer that the target object of Conrad's attention has

changed too, and so this visual technique works alongside the echo effect to make the transition to the past clear.

Again, a joint attention scene is the key to understand this flashback, where the camera and the viewer, in parallel with Conrad, pay attention together to present and past moments in the story. But neither this flashback nor the previous ones (in fact, no flashback) can be understood in terms of simple, classic joint attention. It is true that such structure lies behind these retrospection scenes, but it is only one of the many mental spaces which are projected into the blended space. Once more, the joint attention triangle established in each of the scenes is formed by components which do not belong to the same "here" and "now": the viewer, the camera, and the character (as well as the object he looks at) are not accessible from a single local experience of time and space. On the contrary, each of them belongs to a different mental space, namely the Ground, the Presentation space, and the Reference Space, respectively. As a consequence, the components of the joint attention scene can only come together, be merged and thus acquire meaning by being projected into a blended space of joint attention.

Compression of several inputs to a manageable set of meanings takes place in that blended space in order to make all the relevant information available to our minds. As mentioned above, the notion of the viewer as a general entity is in itself the product of a blend, which brings together all the potential viewers of a film. Also, our conception of the camera as a conscious agent is only possible inside a blend, where all the decisions regarding camera operating are projected. This new blended space is in turn projected into the Presentation space, and that is why we can say that "the camera" guides the viewer. Furthermore, the Presentation and the Reference space are fused into the Virtual space. Only from this position can we say, for instance, that Conrad is seen in a medium shot, or can we accept the actor as a particular character, with its own identity in the fictional world. And only in the Virtual space does the echoed laugh make sense, because Beth's laugh belongs to the Reference space, but the effect that alters it is part of the Presentation space.

It is also inside this blended space of joint attention that a variety of perspectives are simultaneously available. The camera's point of view and the viewer's optical perspective are always fused into one, since the latter is always controlled by the camera. This is the case with Conrad's medium shot (b). But, by the time his mother's laugh is heard, and, above all, when it is perceived with an echo effect, Conrad's point of view is added to the scene. It is not a visual point of view (we do not *see* through the character's eyes), but an auditory one: we *hear* Beth's laugh with Conrad. This is unmistakably his perspective: the camera redirects our attention towards Conrad and, once we are focused on him, his mother's laugh is echoed and gains auditory prominence. At this point, the scene merges three different perspectives (viewer, camera, and character) coming from three diverse mental spaces, and this is only possible by projecting these inputs into a blended space in which this vast, complex network is compressed, and thus is accessible to our understanding.

A variation of the type of memory flashback being discussed (that in which the character's attention is parallel) is found when the recollecting character is not looking at a particular object in the scene, but rather he gazes "into space", like Conrad does in shot (b2). Interestingly, in real-life joint attention,

> [i]f we cannot establish a target object, even after returning to the gazer to reconfirm, no joint visual attention is triggered. We assume that the person is simply staring out "into space" (perhaps occupied with mental tasks such as thinking or dreaming (…)). (Persson, 2003: 74)

However, when a flashback is triggered by the character's look "into space", the viewer ends up seeing the object of the character's thoughts (although, as said, attention is not joint but parallel), as is the case with Conrad's flashback in *Ordinary People*. Certainly, not all film shots showing a character vacantly staring are followed by a memory-flashback scene: sometimes such shots are just employed to represent the character's mood in the present. But when they do serve for introducing a flashback, the retrospection scene is understood by the viewer as rendering the character's memories because of that preceding gaze "into space". Thus, following the real-life pattern of a

look matching a target, a virtual eyeline match is established, even though the rules of real-life joint and parallel attention are contradicted. Film has the power of overcoming those rules, again thanks to the processes of conceptual integration at work.

This particular technique of introducing memory flashbacks, although not the most widely used, is not uncommon. It is found, for instance, in *Casablanca* (1942)*, A Letter to Three Wives* (1949), *Ray* (2004) or *Saving Mr. Banks* (2013).

Figure 4 shows the second flashback employed in *A Letter to Three Wives* (1949) (00:33:30-00:59:20). The film tells the story of three women living in a small town who find out through a letter that a fourth woman, Addie Ross, has just run away with one of their husbands. But they will not be able to find out which one until that night, and so they spend the day worried and each of them wonders if her husband will be the one. In a series of flashbacks, these women recall moments of marriage conflict which may have motivated their husbands' flight. Rita's flashback (Figure 4) is introduced by a POV structure which combines close-ups of Rita (shots (a) and (c1-3)) with the object of her look (trees in shot (b)). Interestingly, the forest surrounding Rita does not trigger her recollections: she is lost in her own thoughts and worries (as her own voice-over indicates: "Why wouldn't George go fishing?", "Why the blue suit?"), which are her actual object of attention. Shot (c1-2) is a progressive zoom-in on Rita's face, while she keeps staring "into space", and it finally dissolves into the following one (c3) and gives way to the past (d).

Once more, the viewer and the camera attend jointly to a series of elements: Rita, the trees surrounding her, and the past which is the object of her thoughts. Rita, on the other hand, attends to her surroundings and, most importantly, to her own memories in parallel to the viewer and the camera. This parallel attention is possible thanks to Rita's look, which prompts the camera and the viewer to follow her gaze in order to find what she is looking at. And although her gaze "into space" would not lead to establish neither joint nor parallel attention in a real-life situation (because the target object could not be found), that is not the case with film: cinema can visually represent a

character's memories, and by doing so it also depicts the target object of that character's look "into space". Thus, Rita's vacant stare guides the camera and the viewer towards her object of attention, and so they both attend in parallel with Rita to those recollections of hers, eavesdropping on them.
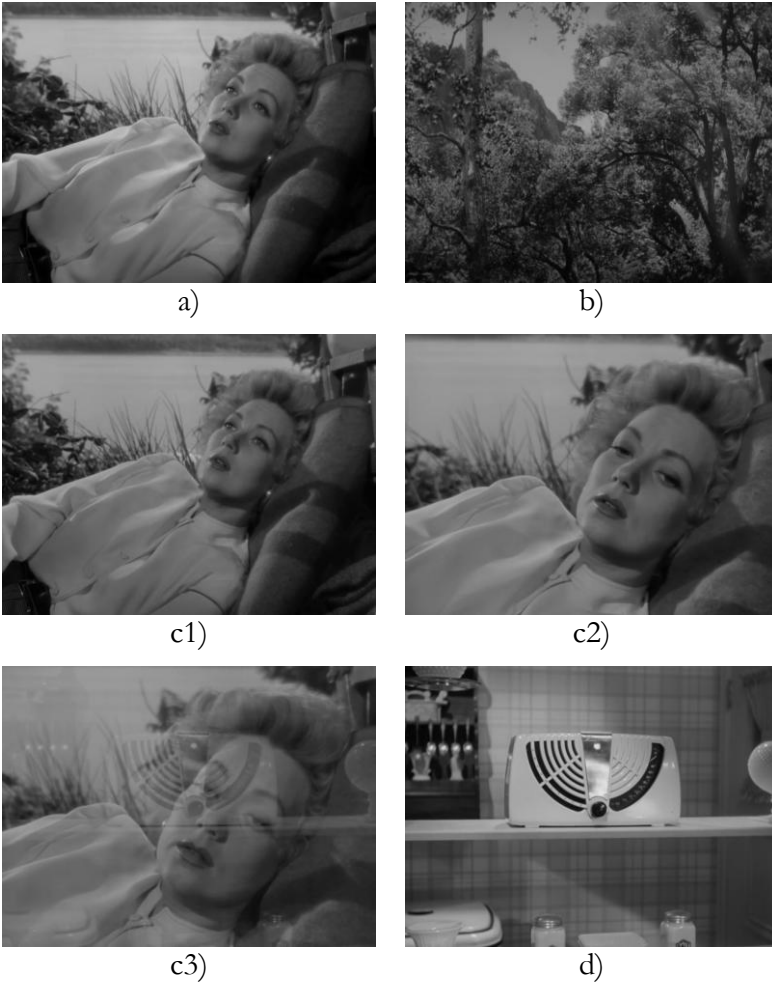

a)

b)

c1)

c2)

c3)

d)

Figure 4. Rita's flashback in *A Letter to Three Wives* (1949)

All the memory flashbacks analyzed so far in this section are examples of character parallel attention with respect to the camera and the viewer. A second kind of memory flashback, as mentioned above, is one in which a character takes part in the joint attention triangle alongside the viewer and the camera. Whenever a character addresses the viewer directly and guides him into the flashback, a joint attention scene takes place between camera, viewer and character, who together pay attention to the narrative past. The character may speak to the viewer in voice-over, as in *Sunset Blvd.* (1950), for instance, or he may appear on screen and look into the camera while he addresses the viewer, as in *Annie Hall* (1977) or *Wit* (2001).

In *Sunset Blvd.*'s famous opening scene (00:01:25-00:03:20), Joe Gillis' voice-over informs the viewer of what is taking place right now in Sunset Boulevard, Los Angeles, where a murder has been committed. He speaks directly to the viewer ("*You*'ll read about it in the late editions, I'm sure. *You*'ll get it over your radio and see it on television (…). But before *you* hear it all distorted and blown out of proportion, (…) maybe *you*'d like to hear the facts, the whole truth"), and a bit later he guides the viewer into the flashback: "Let's go back about six months and find the day when it all started". Throughout the scene, the camera and the viewer jointly attend to the present events guided by Joe, who is reporting the events and thus he is also paying attention to the scene. Equally, Joe directs the viewer's attention towards the past, which is introduced verbally ("Let's go back about six months…"). The camera and the viewer follow this indication, and then the leap to the past takes place. However, rather than saying that both the camera and the viewer are subjected to the character's indications, one could speak of a "deal" between camera and character, a "cinematic deal" to keep the viewer's attention under control. We cannot either look away from what the camera shows us or decide not to follow the character's indications.

This is only possible in a blended space of joint attention: the blended space is needed to bring together the character (a fictional entity), the camera and the "implied" viewer (both the product of a blend, as explained above) in a scene of joint attention, where the participants belong to different mental spaces (Reference,

Presentation and Ground space, respectively) and, moreover, to different types of reality. Also, the character oversteps the limits of the Virtual space where he belongs when he speaks to the viewer. And in the action of addressing the viewer a shared present space is created where character and viewer interact (cf. Dancygier, 2006). Furthermore, the "implied" viewer is materialized in the innumerable actual viewers that watch, have watched and will watch the film in specific film-viewing scenarios, and in each of those cases Joe Gillis refers to a specific "you" in the real world. Again, this would be impossible without a blended space of joint attention (cf. Turner, 2015: 226-227).

In other cases the voice-over character narrator does not refer specifically to the viewer, like Red in *The Shawshank Redemption* (1994), but he is undoubtedly speaking to him. A narrator needs an addressee, and in the case of an extradiegetic narrator that addressee is not another character but the viewer. In *The Shawshank Redemption*, Red tells us from a witness position Andy's story from the moment when he arrives at Shawshank prison. It is Red who directs the viewer along the story, and in doing so there is joint attention between him, the camera and the viewer, for all three are attending to the same thing (Andy's story) and are aware of this "knowing together". It is true that Red could only have witnessed some of the scenes he narrates, and could not possibly have been present in others (e.g. Andy's meetings with the warden, or Andy's escape, told in flashback), but this does not make him less of a witness narrator. He narrates both what he directly saw and what he learned in an indirect way (because Andy told him, or because he saw the consequences of certain acts, as in Tommy's murder). The issue of focalization as knowledge in relation to flashbacks will be taken up later (section 3.3.3, and also chapter 4, section 4.2.1).

At this point, it is necessary to make a small clarification regarding character narrators and parallel attention. Whenever a character is narrating a story to another character intradiegetically, the scene of joint attention established is the same as the one described above for *The Help*, *Big Fish*, *Ordinary People* and *A Letter to Three Wives*. Again, the camera and the viewer attend jointly to the scene in the film where a

character narrator is addressing another character, to whom he tells a story. Although this character's narration directs the viewer's attention through the story, the attention between both of them is not joint, but parallel. The viewer, alongside the camera, is eavesdropping on what the character says, while the character narrator is unaware of their presence and "intrusion". Instances of this kind of joint attention scene are found in *Citizen Kane* (1941)*, Double Indemnity* (1944)*, Rashomon* (1950)*, Forrest Gump* (1994) or *The Usual Suspects* (1995)*,* to name a few.

Returning to those flashback scenes built upon a joint attention scene between camera, viewer and character, one last variety of this type of scene should be mentioned: those cases where the character is not just heard but seen, and by looking into the camera he looks directly at the viewer. The character can do this while also speaking to the viewer, as in *Annie Hall* (1977) or *Wit* (2001) (see chapter 4, Figure 21 for this last example), or can just look at the viewer without saying a word, as Judy does in *Vertigo* (1958). In the scene that precedes the flashback (01:37:35-01:38:30), Scottie follows Judy up to her hotel room, obsessed because of her tremendous resemblance to Madeleine, the woman that he was asked to follow and who has just tragically died. Judy tries to convince him that she is not Madeleine or has nothing to do with her, but upon Scottie's insistence she agrees to have dinner with him. When Scottie leaves the room, Judy looks into the camera as if she were about to confide in us (Figure 5, shots (a1) and (a2)). The shot of her face progressively changes color (a2), and then it dissolves into the following shot (a3), which belongs to the flashback (b) that, replaying a previous scene that was hiding information, finally reveals the story behind Madeleine's death: the real Madeleine was killed by her husband, but in order to pretend that she had died in an accident, a complicated plot had been orchestrated with Judy playing Madeleine's role (cf. chapter 4, section 4.3.4 for a discussion of the replay scene). Scottie does not know this, and Judy pretends to know nothing either. But when Scottie leaves, Judy turns around and looks at the viewer. Her look, characterized by her eyes denoting culpability, says without words that a secret is about to be revealed, and that is the function of the flashback.

a1)   a2)

a3)   b)
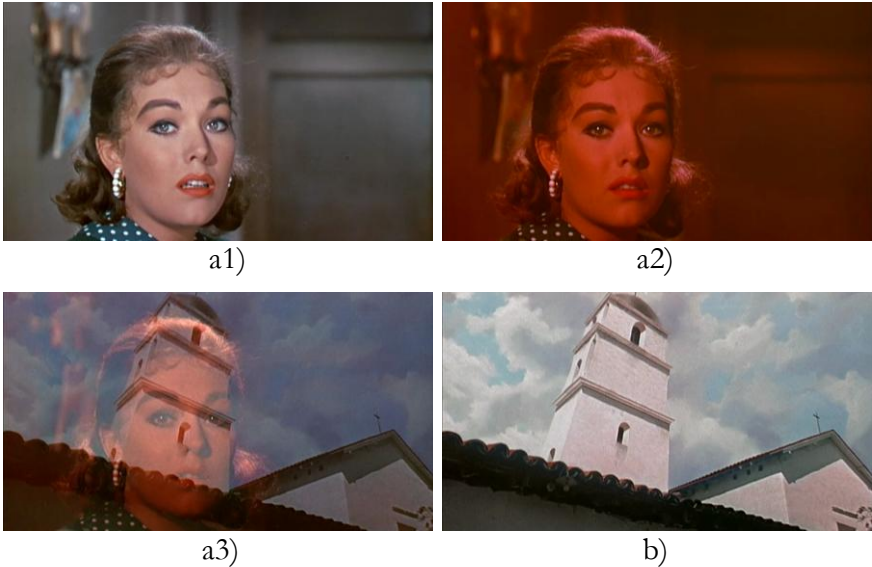
Figure 5. Judy's flashback in *Vertigo* (1958)

If Judy's gaze had been directed off-screen or had she been looking "into space", the camera and the viewer would have attended to the flashback in parallel with her, and Judy would have been unaware of their presence. However, by looking into the camera, and therefore at the viewer, Judy reveals that she is aware of their presence. Then, when the flashback is introduced, it is understood as a secret confessed by Judy, and therefore the camera and the viewer jointly attend with her to the information revealed. Also, Dancygier (2012b: 144-145) points out that, in such cases, the character's eye contact with the viewer pulls the latter into the story as a participant, and thus he is more than a witness. The same could be said of the abovementioned examples where a character speaks directly to the viewer in voice-over.

In summary, considering the variety of flashback examples analyzed in this section, it can be affirmed as a conclusion that a blended space of joint attention is a fundamental element in every filmic retrospection scene. That scene of joint attention varies depending on the role that characters play in it (either attending

jointly or in parallel), but the fundamental structure is always the same: the camera and the viewer jointly attend to the story being told, both to the present and the past events narrated.

The issue we will now turn to is that of the past itself: how is it constructed as such in a flashback? How does the viewer understand the past as past, and not as something else? But before delving into this substantial matter, the immediate following section will give a brief outline of the role of point-of-view editing in flashback scenes.

3.2.4   POINT-OF-VIEW EDITING

Although the basic ideas about point-of-view (POV) editing have been exposed above in relation to the flashback in *The Help*, there are some other aspects about this editing technique that deserve further attention (for a broader explanation of point of view in film, one not just limited to the POV shot, see chapter 4, section 4.2).

From the analysis of a sample of audiovisual narrative fictions, Messaris (1994: 85) observes that POV editing is the most frequent type of transition between shots (more than ninety percent of the total in every case analyzed). It is indeed a very common editing pattern, as the flashbacks examined so far have shown. The fact that this transition is so widespread brings back an issue already discussed in the first section of this chapter: that of conventionality in film technique. Is POV editing purely arbitrary or, on the contrary, is it a conventionalized technique built upon human beings' natural cognitive capacities?

As it has been already mentioned, human beings' natural tendency to follow other person's gaze to its target constitutes the essential basis for the POV shot, which is composed of a glance shot (A) and an object shot (B). Likewise, our gaze-following ability enables us to establish joint visual attention with other subjects, for the result of tracking a look to its target is that of jointly attending to that target. In this case we may speak of "deictic gaze", a gaze that points to something else (Persson: 2003: 67-68). Thus, POV editing is built in such a way that it meets the necessary conditions so that a classic joint attention scene can be established. Certainly, as it has been clarified

above, many times the character participating in the POV shot is not jointly attending with the viewer and the camera. However, his gaze is tracked by them to its target object, and because of this that gaze acquires a communicative function which is fundamental to the POV device (Carroll, 1996b).

Considering all this, it may well be argued that "[t]he surface of POV editing is not a matter of arbitrary choice, but is adapted to exploit, trigger, or 'tap into' the structure of joint visual attention" (Persson, 2003: 99). POV editing is, indeed, built upon viewers' natural, every-day cognitive abilities like gaze following and joint attention (Messaris, 1994: 80). Regarding the origin of deictic-gaze behavior (considering whether it is a social or a biological one), Persson (2003: 73) suggests that "[a] compromise position might postulate a genetic basis that provides us with some *predisposition* to develop patterns such as deictic gaze but whose actual development probably demands a rich physical and social environment". In this sense, and following Bordwell, he argues that deictic-gaze behavior may be a "contingent universal" (Persson, 2003: 73) (cf. section 3.1.1). And it is this universality of human beings' capacity for gaze following and joint attention what makes POV editing so easily understandable.

Although based on our natural cognitive capacities, POV editing was not always as we know it today: it had to evolve and go through the experimental phase of trial and error through which virtually every film technique in the continuity system went through. In the early years of film (1895-1905, approx.), the camera was quite static and worked as if it were impersonating an immobile spectator sitting in the theatre, in front of the stage. Given that POV editing demands extreme camera changes, it took a while to introduce this filmic technique (Persson, 2003: 49-50). The gradual introduction over the years of camera movement, eyeline matches, the medium shot and other technical variations, as well as the growing importance of off-screen space finally lead to a fundamental change in the relationship between viewer and cinematic space: the viewer was not any more sitting *in front* of the space of the film, as in the theatre, but *surrounded* by that space, *immersed* in it:

> [w]ith true POV editing, shot-reverse shot (...), and other devices, the spectator had to build more complicated spatial models than previously, enabling space to immerse her or him on all sides rather than remaining in front. These devices exploited the spatial abilities of the spectator and triggered off-screen expectations and inference making, thereby creating a (mental) "surround space". (Persson, 2003: 62)

POV editing as we know it today is a result of this spatial change. Making use of off-screen space to create expectations was a fundamental variation in this process of spatial immersion of the viewer. The character's look off-screen in a POV shot now raised a perceptual inquiry and lead the viewer to make inferences about the object of that gaze (cf. section 3.1.2), thus creating that "mental surround space" that Persson (2003) mentions.

However, although it would have been obvious in principle that POV editing evolved to more closely resemble real-life joint attention scenes, this was not the case. In a number of ways, POV editing moved away from our daily joint attention experiences: on the one hand, in real-life joint attention we look both at the gazer and at the object observed from the same position (although we are usually free to move to a different one whenever we want to), while in POV editing there is usually a change of position from the gaze shot to the object shot. That is, we normally look at the gazer (character) and the object from different positions, those which the camera assumes. Sometimes the character's very position is adopted in the object shot, and at other times that position is only approximate (Persson, 2003: 87-92). On the other hand, in real-life situations we can look back and forth between gazer and object observed, while this is not possible in POV editing because in film the viewer is subject to the decisions of the camera (cf. section 3.2.2). Nevertheless, our capacity for joint attention and gaze following is still at the basis of our comprehension of POV editing, and in fact the universality of this film technique seems to be due to its natural cognitive grounding.

Finally, a brief note should be added regarding the use of POV editing in the introduction of flashback scenes. Interestingly, Messaris (1994) distinguishes POV editing and flashback scenes in terms of

three elements: location, time frame and stream of reality. He defines POV editing as "a shift in camera position within a single location, a single time frame, and a single stream of reality" (1994: 74), while flashbacks, in Messaris' terms, would involve a change in the type of reality portrayed on the screen (from "reality" to memory, dream, fantasy, etc.), as well as a change in time and, at times, a change in location (1994: 93; 104). Messaris argues that the typical transitions employed in dream sequences, such as the dissolve or the blurring of the image, have also been the usual ones in flashback scenes. This indicates that for the first filmmakers there was some sort of common principle shared by dream and hallucination sequences and flashback scenes (cf. chapter 2, section 2.2.1), and Messaris suggests that that shared element is "mental disorientation", of which the blurred image is an analogical representation (1994: 104-105). This is the reason why he classifies flashbacks as transitions to a different type of reality, and not just as devices depicting a change in narrative time. However, Messaris also acknowledges that the blurred image as a cue for type-of-reality transitions is obsolete, and that the tendency now is to eliminate explanatory devices and shift the burden of explanation onto the context (1994: 106).

Even though these transitions have become obsolete to introduce flashbacks, Messaris still characterizes retrospections as depicting a change in stream of reality. In this sense, POV editing and flashbacks would be incompatible techniques, since they do not coincide in any of the three variables proposed (location, time, and type of reality). Still, the flashbacks analyzed so far (e.g. *The Help, Big Fish, Ordinary People*) show that it is not unusual for flashbacks to be introduced by a POV editing sequence. In consequence, whether flashbacks are considered as involving a change in type of reality or not, it is a fact that the flashback device is totally compatible with POV editing.

Maybe the problem for this apparent and theoretical incompatibility lies in Messaris' categorization, and not in flashbacks and POV editing as devices per se. Among other things, the notion of POV editing may have to be expanded to one not restricted to a single location, time and type of reality. In this sense, a note by Persson (2003: 64) regarding POV editing may be clarifying: "POV

editing creates spatial relationships between different shot spaces [diegetic spaces]. (…) [S]hot spaces somehow belong together spatially, temporally, causally, or conceptually". This causal and conceptual relation between shots is indeed the one prevailing in POV editing sequences that introduce flashbacks, and thus, although there is a temporal (and usually also spatial) rupture when the leap to the past takes place, there is still narrative continuity (cf. section 3.1.2). This continuity of narrative flow is not only achieved by means of cinematic cues that conform to the continuity system, but, as it has been explained above, it is also attained through the narrative context. Broadly speaking, it is this narrative context and the inferences we draw from it what makes POV editing and flashbacks perfectly compatible.

In any case, it was not my concern here to make an assessment of Messaris' proposal. Rather, my only aim was to make clear that flashbacks and POV editing are not conflicting devices which cannot appear together, but quite the contrary. All in all, POV editing and the cognitive process of blended joint attention are two fundamental elements in the construction of many memory flashbacks. The following section will explain the role of the past in the blended joint attention triangle that a given (memory or non-memory) flashback establishes. In a nutshell, the past will be described as the object of attention of the camera, the viewer and, in the case of memory flashbacks, also the character.

3.3 THE PAST AS THE OBJECT OF ATTENTION

The blended joint attention scene that has the camera and the viewer (and sometimes the character) attending to a specific element in the present time of the story incorporates a fundamental component in flashback scenes: in such cases, a past event in the story becomes the object of attention. That is, the viewer and the camera, following at times the character's attentive look, pay heed to a past narrative space.

But how is the past constructed or "signified"? How is the meaning of "past" expressed in a film flashback? Clearly, the notion

of retrospection does not come up solely by setting up a joint attention structure, and thus blended joint attention per se is not enough to convey the leap-to-the-past meaning. The introduction of a retrospection within the narrative requires a new narrative space to be set up, and that space needs to be activated by a *space builder* (Fauconnier, 1994 [1985], 1997). Space builders are "expressions that may establish a new space or refer back to one already introduced in the discourse" (Fauconnier, 1994 [1985]: 17). Verbal expressions such as "in 1929", "in that story" or "in Michael's opinion" constitute space builders that open new mental spaces. In the case of narrative retrospections, the past narrative space may be activated by expressions like "in 1929", "last year", "five months ago" and others. However, as some of the flashbacks analyzed so far have shown, cinematic retrospections do not always employ a verbal space builder to set up the past narrative space: visual and auditory space builders are also employed often, either on their own or accompanied by other cues. The following section will explore the different ways in which films activate the past narrative space that constitutes a flashback.

3.3.1   BUILDING THE PAST NARRATIVE SPACE

3.3.1.1 VERBAL SPACE BUILDERS

The simplest way to prompt a retrospection scene in film is to use intertitles and insert titles[24] which depict verbal space builders. This was a common technique in the silent film period due to the absence of synchronized sound. In *Grandma's Boy* (1922), for instance, Harold Lloyd's conversation with his grandmother is reproduced in a series of intertitles. At a given time, the grandmother says: "On the morning of April 7, 1862…", and right after the flashback is introduced with a dissolve (00:32:50-00:40:00). *Sunrise: A Song of Two Humans* (1927) introduces a flashback (00:09:10-00:10:10) to the main characters'

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[24] Although sometimes these two terms are confused or employed as equivalents, I will differentiate them here. *Intertitles* or *title cards* are "shots of texts printed on material that does not belong to the diegesis of a film and, therefore, are distinct from textual inserts such as calling cards, letters, posters, etc." (Dupré la Tour, 2005: 326). They are placed between shots or scenes. *Insert titles*, on the other hand, display text on the screen but superposing it on a given shot or scene.

happy past through the dialogue of two women from the village: "They used to be like children, carefree… always happy and laughing…". When the flashback is closed, the return to the narrative space of the present is emphasized by another piece of dialogue in an intertitle: "*Now* he ruins himself for that woman from the City". Also in *The Birth of a Nation* (1915) one of the flashbacks (01:48:48-01:50:22) is prompted by a narrative intertitle, "Bitter memories will not allow the poor bruised heart of the South to forget", which opens up a narrative space of memory and recollection. The scene later shows Margaret Cameron recalling her brother's death in the war.

The insertion of text as a narrative device was not abandoned with the arrival of sound films, but it continued to be used and it is still employed in today's films. In *The Godfather: Part II* (1974), for instance, present and past are interwoven. Whenever the narrative goes back to the past in order to tell the story of Vito Corleone's life, an insert title gives the necessary information about time, and about character and place as well, as Figure 6 shows (00:40:00-00:41:55), thus (re)activating the past narrative space. More recent films also use this kind of verbal space builder to introduce a flashback: for example, *Hacksaw Ridge* (2016) marks the leap to the past with a simple "Sixteen years earlier" insert title (00:03:00-00:03:10).

Figure 6. Insert title and flashback in *The Godfather: Part II* (1974)

The introduction of synchronized sound in cinema at the end of the 1920s made it possible for much narrative information to be transmitted verbally through dialogues and narrative voices. Thus, verbal space builders for the narrative space of the past are found integrated in such narrative devices. In many cases, flashbacks are introduced by a narrator, usually a character, who is telling a story either to another character or directly to the viewer. The flashback is then an enactment of the facts being narrated (or an enacted recounting if the narrator's voice-over continues throughout the flashback) (cf. Chatman, 1978: 32; Bordwell, 1995 [1985]: 78). Examples of this technique are found in many Hollywood films from the 1940s and first half of the 1950s (Bordwell, 2017)[25]. For instance, *Citizen Kane* (1941) tells the story of Charles Foster Kane's life through the testimonies of different people who knew him. Those narrations give way to several flashbacks in which Kane's life is shown. Different narrators setting forth somebody else's life are also used, for example, in *The Barefoot Contessa* (1954) to recount in flashbacks Maria Vargas' life. In other films, the voices of a variety of narrators are employed to tell the facts around a particular event or connected events regarding a few characters, as in *The Locket* (1946) or in *All About Eve* (1950), in which the narrated events are shown in flashback scenes. Obviously, in all such cases the narrators' perspectives may be either complementary or contrasting (cf. chapter 4, section 4.1.2). In other films, a single narrator recounts some events which are then enacted in flashbacks that, in many cases, constitute the core of the film. Instances of this are *Double Indemnity* (1944), *Out of the Past* (1947) or *Sunset Blvd.* (1950). Certainly, this combination of narrators and flashbacks is a technique neither limited to Hollywood nor to the films of the classical era, as movies like *Rashomon* (1950), *Forrest Gump* (1994), *The Usual Suspects* (1995), *Wit* (2001) or *Big Fish* (2003) show. Also, there are other variations of the narrator-flashback combination, apart from the ones mentioned above. In *The Marrying Kind* (1952), for instance, a couple considering divorce narrates to the judge their respective views on their married

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[25] However, Bordwell et al. (1985: 42) state that "[f]lashbacks are rarer in the classical Hollywood film than we normally think. (...) What probably makes the period seem dominated by flashbacks is not the numerical frequency of the device, but the intricate ways it was used".

life and the causes that they think are leading them to separate. The film plays with the contrast between verbal and visual narration (flashbacks) in order to show the contradictions in the couple's memories of their marriage. This contrast is also used with a comic effect in *Singin' in the Rain* (1952) and in *Forrest Gump* (1994), for instance.

When the story told by a narrator is enacted in a flashback, the very act of narrating constitutes the space builder for the past narrative space. However, sometimes a specific verbal expression in that narration is the one that triggers the leap to the past. For example, in *Double Indemnity* (1944) Walter Neff clearly points out in his confession that "It all began last May. Around the end of May, it was" (00:06:45-00:07:15). In *All About Eve* (1950), Karen's voice-over sets the time coordinates before the flashback begins: "It's June now. That was early October... Only last October" (00:07:25-00:08:15). And Joe Gillis consciously introduces the flashback in *Sunset Blvd.* (1950): "Let's go back about six months and find the day when it all started" (00:01:25-00:03:20). Also, in other cases the past narrative space that is set up is specifically associated with the field of memory. In *The Man Who Shot Liberty Valance* (1962), the replay flashback (cf. chapter 4, section 4.3.4) is triggered when Doniphon reveals Stoddard that he did not kill Liberty Valance: "Think back, pilgrim. Valance came out of the saloon. You were walking toward him when he fired his first shot. *Remember*?" (01:56:35-01:56:55). In *Spellbound* (1945), the main character finally discovers the cause of his mental condition when he recalls a past episode ("It was something in my childhood. Something in my childhood! I *remember* now!") which is then enacted in a flashback (1:38:20-1:38:50). And in *Wit* (2001), right before a flashback Vivian states: "I can *recall* the time, the very hour, of the very day when I knew words would be my life's work" (00:35:00-00:35:15) (see chapter 4, section 4.3.3 for an analysis of this particular scene).

Nevertheless, although verbal space builders constitute a very clear and simple way to prompt a flashback, and indeed they are widely used, they are not indispensable to set up the narrative space of the past. Pure visual and auditory cues also work as space builders by

themselves, as will be explained below. In fact, another possibility is to trigger a flashback by means of a word or set of words (either visually or aurally reproduced) that make a character recall past events. In such cases, what prompts the recollection is the word itself (its mere mention), not its content (its conceptual meaning), and thus words employed that way could be classified either as visual or auditory space builders (cf. sections 3.3.1.2 and 3.3.1.3). An example of this is found at the end of *The Usual Suspects* (1995), in the scene where agent Kujan discovers that Verbal has been lying all along (01:39:15-01:42:35) (cf. chapter 4, section 4.3.4): Kujan notices words and pieces of information on the office wall in front of him ("Quarter", "Skokie", "Redfoot", "Guatemala", "Kobayashi", etc.), and realizes that Verbal took those words on the fly in order to make up his answers to the police. As the camera closes-up on the words, Verbal's testimony is heard (replayed) in voice-over, remembered by Kujan, and thus the words written on the wall serve as prompts for Kujan's recollection.

Furthermore, verbal space builders are usually accompanied by other cues that complement the meaning of the verbal expression and contribute to set up the past narrative space. Many of the films mentioned in this section, particularly those belonging to the Hollywood classical period, follow a similar pattern whenever a memory flashback is triggered by an intradiegetic narrator: the camera, either by means of a zoom-in or a tracking shot[26], increasingly focuses on the character's face, and the transition to the past is marked by a dissolve and, in many instances, by extradiegetic music as well (cf. Bordwell et al., 1985: 5). In fact, this combination of cues can already be found in the silent period. In the silent film *The Passer-by* (1912), the story told by the main character is enacted in a long flashback (00:02:40-00:15:30) which is triggered by an intertitle ("After-dinner stories. The passer-by tells his [story] reluctantly") and

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[26] A *tracking shot* is "[a] mobile framing that travels through space forward, backward, or laterally" (Bordwell & Thompson, 2008: 481), and it involves the camera changing its position. By contrast, a *zoom shot* brings us closer or further away from a particular character or object by manipulating the camera lens' focal length, but not the camera as a whole (Bordwell & Thompson, 2008: 170). As a result, zoom shots alter perspective relations of the elements on screen, while tracking shots keep the proportions of scale, depth, etc.

is then narrated through several other intertitles that show the character's words. But the flashback is prompted as well through a camera tracking towards the character's face and a dissolve from the man in the present (shot (a) in Figure 7) to the same man in the scene of the past (b). Also, after the dissolve to the past the camera tracks out from the character's face, and the same pattern is repeated (tracking-in plus tracking-out) when the flashback ends and the narration goes back to the present. This focusing of the camera on the character's face is a visual way of signaling both the subjective nature of the upcoming flashback (it is a memory) and the source of that memory (the recalling character), as already mentioned above regarding the flashbacks in *Big Fish* (2003) and *A Letter to Three Wives* (1949).

a)   b)

Figure 7. Flashback transition in *The Passer-by* (1912)

As for flashbacks' visual transitions, the most common device in Hollywood cinema up to the 1950s was the dissolve, although fades and superimpositions are also found. Sometimes, in order to make the transition less prominent, a diegetic element from the scene in the present is employed in order to imitate the functioning of the transitional device, which is this way attenuated. For instance, the smoke of Rick's cigarette in *Casablanca* (1942) serves to disguise the blurred-image effect in the present, and then the dissolve into the past follows. The same technique is used to introduce the first flashback in *The Locket* (1946) (00:06:45-00:07:05), as well as the replay flashback

in *The Man Who Shot Liberty Valance* (1962) (01:56:35-01:57:05) (see Figure 8 for these two last examples). Also, in this last film the present does not dissolve into the past, but fades to black. Then, surprisingly, the black screen becomes Doniphon's back as we see him walk forward, preparing to help Stoddard in the replay flashback.

a)   b)

Figure 8. Smoke as a transition in *The Locket* (1946) (a) and *The Man Who Shot Liberty Valance* (1962) (b)

The dissolve as a flashback transition is not common anymore[27]. In contemporary cinema, as some flashback examples have shown (and some others will prove below), cut transitions seem to be the most frequent for flashback scenes, which are cued by means of other devices such as insert titles, narrative voices, gazes and point-of-view shots (in the case of memory flashbacks), etc. However, filmmakers also rely on context much more than they used to, and thus there are also uncued flashbacks that the viewer understands by putting them in relation to other events in the story (see section 3.3.2 below).

3.3.1.2 VISUAL SPACE BUILDERS

Visual (and auditory) cues can also function as space builders of the past narrative space, without the need for a verbal expression to

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[27] It may not be common nowadays as a flashback transition, but the dissolve has made a come-back as a transition for other purposes since the 1990s, and is mostly found in montage sequences (cf. chapter 5, section 5.2.1) Still, it is not widely used as it was in the Hollywood classical period (cf. Cutting et al., 2011).

help the viewer understand those cues successfully (as will be explained below, it is rather the narrative context what makes us comprehend those cues in an appropriate way). This section and the next will be devoted to visual and auditory space builders that by themselves activate the narrative space of the past. Specifically, those space builders will be discussed as "narrative anchors".

The concept of "narrative anchors" was introduced by Dancygier (2008, 2012b) and it refers to those expressions in a given narrative "which set up or suggest the availability of narrative spaces, but do not elaborate them right away. Such 'place-holders' may activate new narrative spaces and allow them to remain active, but the spaces are elaborated gradually as the text unfolds" (Dancygier, 2012b: 42). By setting up new narrative spaces, narrative anchors sometimes work as space builders, but that is not their only possible function: they can also evoke and reactivate narrative spaces (like the song "As time goes by" does in *Casablanca* (1942), as will be explained later), they prompt for cross-mappings or link-building between those spaces (this is achieved by all the narrative anchors discussed below, since they connect the present and past narrative spaces in a flashback), and they may lead to cross-input projections from one narrative space to another, thus contributing to the emergent blend that is the story as a whole (in *The Miracle Worker* (1962), for instance, as explained below, young Anne in the past and Helen in the present are cross-linked through analogy, and aspects of Anne's younger self are projected into the present to enlighten Helen's character and story) (Dancygier, 2012b: 42-44).

In several memory flashback scenes from films already mentioned, the retrospection is triggered by a POV shot which depicts a character focusing his attention on a specific object of his surroundings. This element is then the anchor for the leap to the past in the narrative. In *The Help*, for instance, the flashback to Skeeter's childhood is prompted by her pensive look and the bench she is staring at (see Figure 1 above). In this scene, the bench is made salient by becoming the object of Skeeter's attention (and also of the camera and the viewer, by means of blended joint attention) and by being presented in a single shot in which it is clearly the focal point. This saliency

creates expectations: the bench is not a regular bench, or just a prop, but must have a story-specific meaning. As the same bench (even from the same angle, in a clear graphic match) appears in the present and in the past narrative space, it is a narrative anchor functioning as a space builder that activates the narrative space of the past. Furthermore, by virtue of Skeeter's focused look in the present, the scene in the past is understood as depicting Skeeter's memories. There are several connections being established between the present and the past narrative spaces which allow for these meanings to emerge, but most importantly there is an identity connection between the young adult and the teenager Skeeter, as well as between the bench in the present and in the past. Also, a relation of change links both narrative spaces, for Skeeter has changed as she got older, and, in addition, both spaces are connected by a time relation, as they depict two different moments of Skeeter's life taking place at the same location[28] (cf. chapter 5, section 5.2 for a discussion of identity and time "vital relations" in flashbacks). These cross-mappings are only possible once the past space is introduced and developed. Particularly, the reappearance of the bench triggers a fundamental cross-mapping (Dancygier, 2008: 60) that leads to interpret this object as a bridge between two moments in time.

Another example following this same pattern is found in *Begin Again* (2013), in a scene where Gretta, the protagonist, watches in a rather gloomy spirit one of the videos she recorded during past happy times with her then boyfriend (00:27:45-00:28:45). Again, a POV shot shows the object of Gretta's attention and this editing pattern makes that object salient. In this case, the object working as a narrative anchor is the video played in Gretta's phone (shots (b) and (d) in Figure 9). Like the bench in *The Help*, the video is a narrative anchor that bridges present and past by appearing in both narrative spaces (the action of recording that video is shown in the past scene, as seen in shot (f)). Cross-mappings connecting elements in both spaces (Gretta, the phone and the recording, two moments in time, etc.) are

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[28] "Identity", "Change" and "Time" are some of the many "vital relations" that, according to Fauconnier & Turner (2002: 91-102), conceptually link elements from different mental spaces (cf. chapter 5).

also as essential here as they were in *The Help* in order for the phone to function as an anchor.
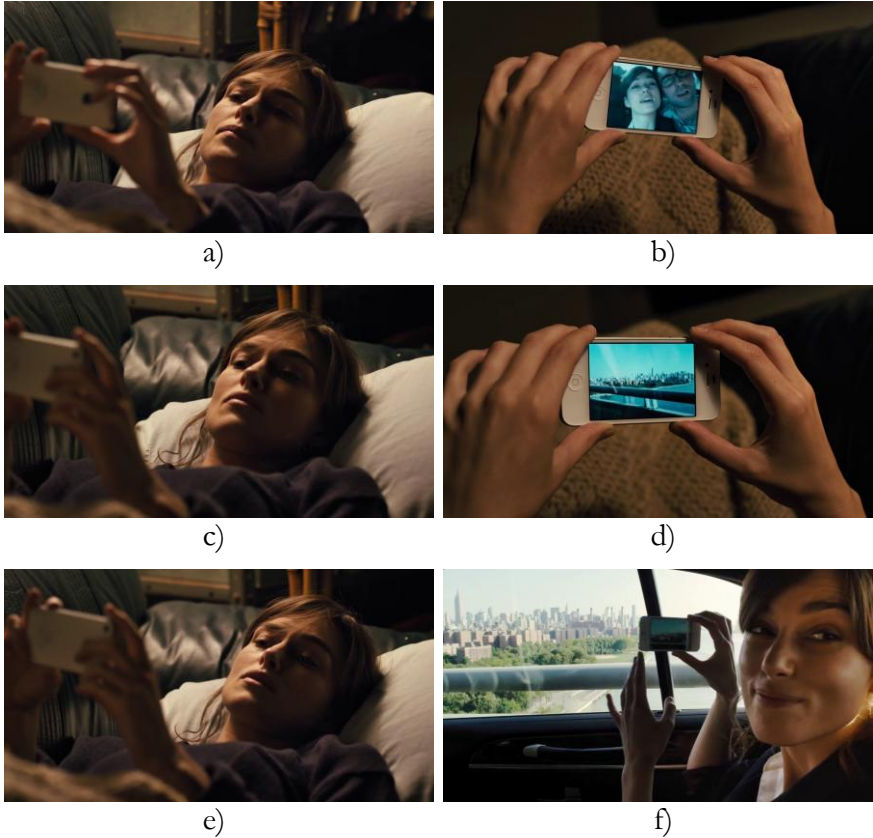
Figure 9. *Begin Again* (2013) flashback

However, there is a slight variation in this scene, because the object in the present does not just "announce" the past, but directly shows it in the video that is played[29]. In that sense, the video is an

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[29] This would be one of those instances Bordwell (1995 [1985]) describes in which the syuzhet presents as simultaneous two events which are successive (i.e. non simultaneous) in the fabula. Although it is a rare case, "it can be observed (…) when, say, characters watch a film or a television program depicting prior

explicit and redundant anchor: it presents the memories that it seeks to prompt, and in doing so it also brings into the present a piece of the past that will be shown in the flashback right after. Once the flashback is introduced, however, the viewer is no longer restricted to see only what the phone recorded, but he is fully immersed in the past narrative space.

Some other flashback scenes built upon this same pattern (a character focusing on an object that then triggers the leap to the past) establish the link between both narrative spaces by showing two similar objects in the present and in the past (rather than presenting the very same one). That is the case, for instance, of Lora Mae's flashback in *A Letter to Three Wives* (1949) (01:01:00-01:28:50). Her memories of the past are prompted by the sound of a dripping sink (shot (a) in Figure 10). Lora Mae's thoughts are then heard in voice-over ("Maybe you haven't got everything that you wanted after all") and the dripping is intensified. The transition to the past is marked by a dissolve between shots (c) and (d), while the sound of the dripping water is distorted and mixed with Lora Mae's phrase (repeated), also distorted and matched to the rhythm of the dripping.

This flashback, the third and last in the film, builds on the previous two (Deborah's and Rita's), which also rely on character gaze and on distorted voice-overs. Thus, narrative context leads the viewer to expect a flashback in Lora Mae's scene as well. In this case, the dripping sink and its sound function as narrative anchors that activate the past narrative space and give access to it. The scene belonging to the past opens up with a dripping sink (d), but a different one from that of shot (c). Still, the connection between both is that of identity, since they represent two instances of the same kind of object. This cross-mapping between the present and the past narrative space is established after (c) dissolves into (d), bridging both narrative spaces: thus, the sink and its dripping sound, integrated in a POV shot, set up the new narrative space as belonging to the past in the story.

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fabula events: the act of watching and the past events are simultaneously presented in the syuzhet" (Bordwell, 1995 [1985]: 77), as is the case in this scene from *Begin Again* (2013).

a)

b)

c)

d)

Figure 10. Lora Mae's flashback in
A Letter to Three Wives (1949)

In *The Miracle Worker* (1962), a flashback is introduced by establishing an analogy between the two main characters (00:51:15-00:52:25). The film narrates the story of Helen Keller (blind, deaf and mute since she was a baby) and her tutor, Anne Sullivan, who taught her to communicate. About halfway through the film, the reading of a text makes Anne consider that her efforts with the ill-tempered Helen are worthwhile, and the sight of her student through the window makes her recall her own wish to go to school and learn when she was a child (Figure 11, shot (a)). Helen's figure in (a) dissolves into shot (b), which depicts young Anne Sullivan walking in a manner very similar to Helen's in (a). Before the dissolve, a series of voice-overs belonging to the past are heard in the present (e.g. "Talk to them!", "You can get out!"), all speaking to young Anne who, later on in the flashback, says: "Mr. Sanborn, I want to go to school!". The past narrative space, then, first steps into the present in auditory form. However, the space builder for the flashback is Helen's figure, which

functions as a narrative anchor that activates the past narrative space while linking it to the present one. Once shot (b) is introduced, a double cross-mapping is established between shots (a) and (b). On the one hand, there is an identity connection between Anne in the present and Anne in the past. On the other hand, Helen in the present and Anne in the past are linked through an analogy connection: both Helen and Anne are value inputs for the role "blind girl in need of and longing for an education", and thus they become analogues (cf. Fauconnier & Turner, 2002: 98-99). This connection, rendered visually through a dissolve and which links present and past in the film, is also fundamental in terms of the cross-input projection from Anne as a child in the past narrative space to Helen in the present: by virtue of this analogy connection, Helen's story is seen in light of Anne's own past experiences.

a)   b)
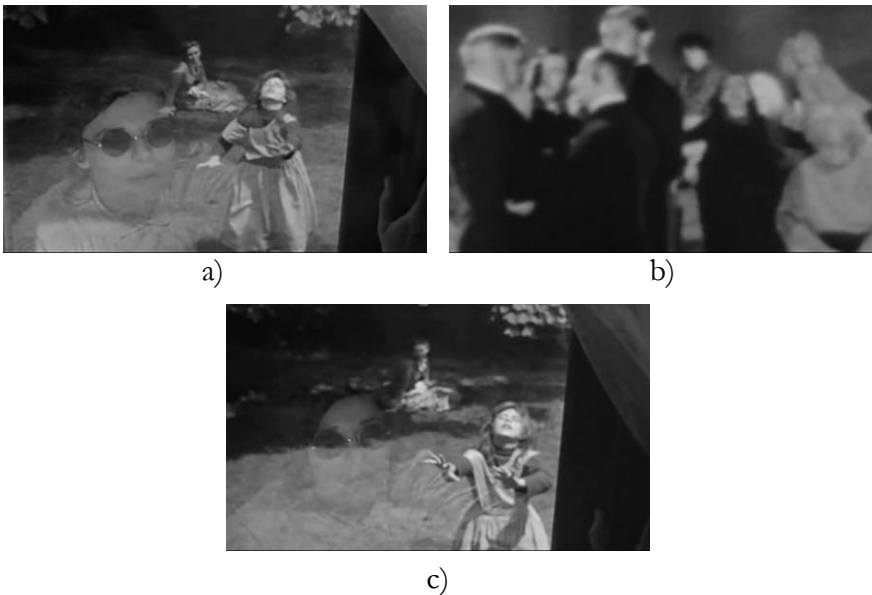

c)

Figure 11. Anne Sullivan's flashback in *The Miracle Worker* (1962)

This kind of transition between narrative spaces based on identity or analogy connections is not uncommon in film. In *The Passer-by* (1912), for instance, present and past are linked by means of an identity connection between the protagonist (the passer-by) in the present and himself in the past, which is rendered visually through a dissolve (see Figure 7 above). A similar connection is established at the beginning of *Saving Mr. Banks* (2013) between P.L. Travers as a child and as an adult (00:00:50-00:01:40). The film narrates the complicated process of production of Disney's *Mary Poppins* (1964) due to the continuous objections posed by Travers, the author of the Mary Poppins books. The narrative alternates the story of the production of the movie in the present with fragments of Travers' childhood in Australia, and further shows how some episodes in her childhood (particularly those related to her father) influenced her writing of the Mary Poppins stories. These two main narrative spaces (present and past) are set up at the beginning of the film. First, location and time are signaled by an insert title: "Maryborough, Australia, 1906" (shot (a1) in Figure 12). Then, a crane shot[30] goes over the palm trees and the blue sky, going down progressively until the camera "lands" on top of young Travers (a2). Shortly after, this shot dissolves into shot (b), which shows adult Travers adopting the same posture as her younger self, and the identity connection is thus established. Finally, there is a cut to shot (c), in which a calendar indicates the time period in the present narrative space. Thus, right from the beginning the film presents the two main narrative spaces involved in the story and the connection between them. Each narrative space will be then developed and elaborated throughout the movie. Most importantly, every flashback in the film builds upon this identity connection and the established link between both narrative spaces: when a retrospection scene takes place, it is only necessary to reactivate the spaces and connections set up at the outset.

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[30] A *crane shot* is "[a] shot with a change in framing accomplished by placing the camera above the subject and moving through the air in any direction" (Bordwell & Thompson: 2008, 477).

a1)

a2)

b)

c)
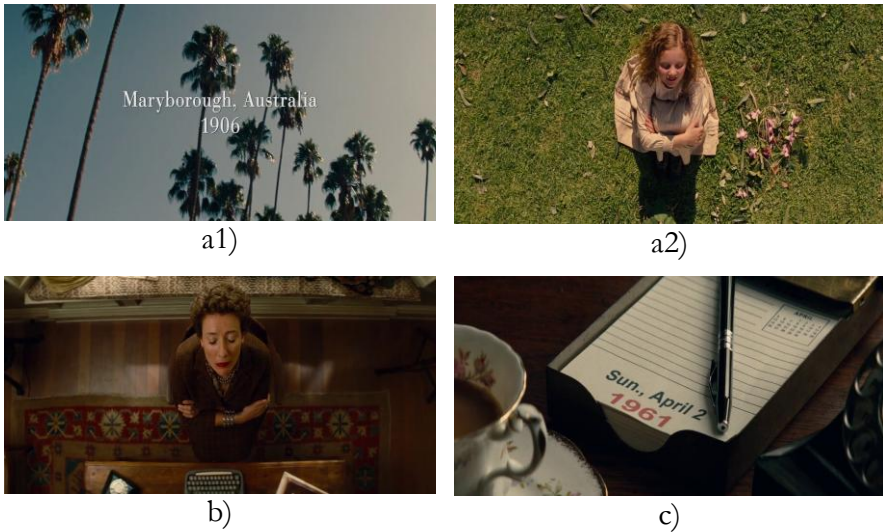
Figure 12. Narrative spaces and identity connections
in *Saving Mr. Banks* (2013)

Unlike *Saving Mr. Banks,* other films employ flashbacks which offer little information and which are in need of narrative context and further elaboration in order for the viewer to understand them successfully. That is the case of the famous first flashback in *Hiroshima, Mon Amour* (1959) (00:19:00-00:19:35), in which the sight of the hand of her current lover (shot (b) in Figure 13) leads the protagonist to remember her former lover's hand (d) and his death in the war. The hand as seen by the woman in shot (b), which is a narrative anchor working as space builder, activates the narrative space of the past (d). However, the flashback is but a brief image of a dead German soldier and a woman crying over him. This flashback is not understood until later in the film, when two longer flashbacks fill in the narrative gaps about the woman's past (Turim, 1989: 211-212).
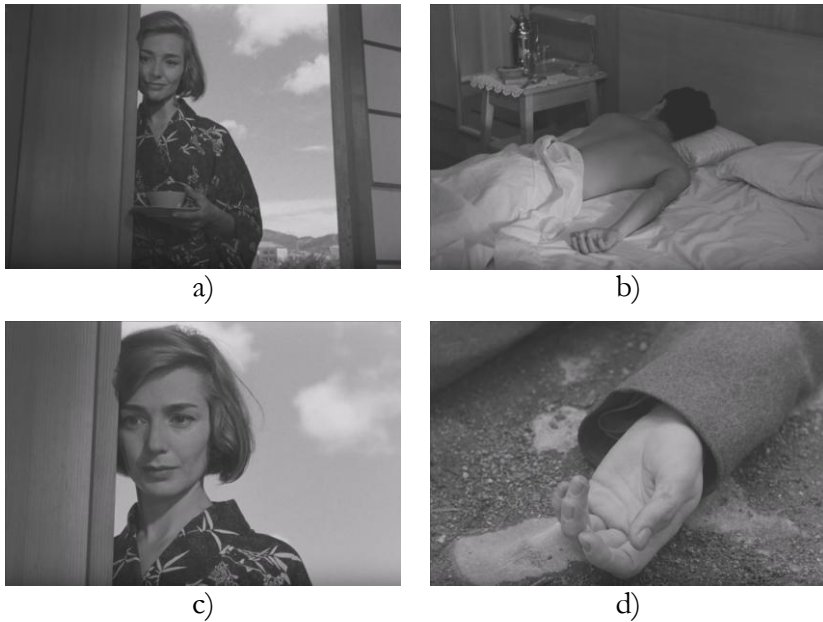
Figure 13. Flashback in *Hiroshima, Mon Amour* (1959)

Finally, one last example of a visual space builder in the form of narrative anchor will serve to illustrate that these kinds of anchors need not necessarily be linked to a character's memory, and also that they may develop a poetic function. In *The Shawshank Redemption* (1994), Andy's escape from prison is narrated by Red in voice-over and enacted in a flashback (01:54:35-02:01:50). Certainly, as stated above, Red did not witness Andy's escape; actually, he did not even know about his breakout plans. Thus, the events narrated by Red are not part of his direct memories (although this does not make him an unreliable witness for, as we know at the end of the film, he could have later known all the facts from Andy himself). The flashback recounting Andy's flight, which also includes a replay of a scene previously seen, is verbally cued by Red but also prompted by a rock hammer serving as an anchor (see Figure 14). In this case, what calls the viewer's attention upon the anchoring object is not the character's look, but the narrator's voice-over: "In 1966, Andy Dufresne escaped from Shawshank Prison. All they found of him was a muddy set of

prison clothes, a bar of soap, and *an old rock hammer* damn near   worn down to the nub". The scene in the present narrative space shows a team of policemen and other people searching for Andy down the river, and finding only a series of objects related to him. Upon finding the rock hammer, a policeman holds it and a photographer takes a picture for a newspaper (shown in shot (a)). The camera progressively zooms in on the object (a2), while Red says: "I remember thinking it would take a man six hundred years to tunnel through the wall with it. Old Andy did it in less than twenty". Right after, shot (a2) dissolves into shot (b) and the flashback is introduced. The rock hammer thus bridges present and past by working as a narrative anchor.

a1)   a2)

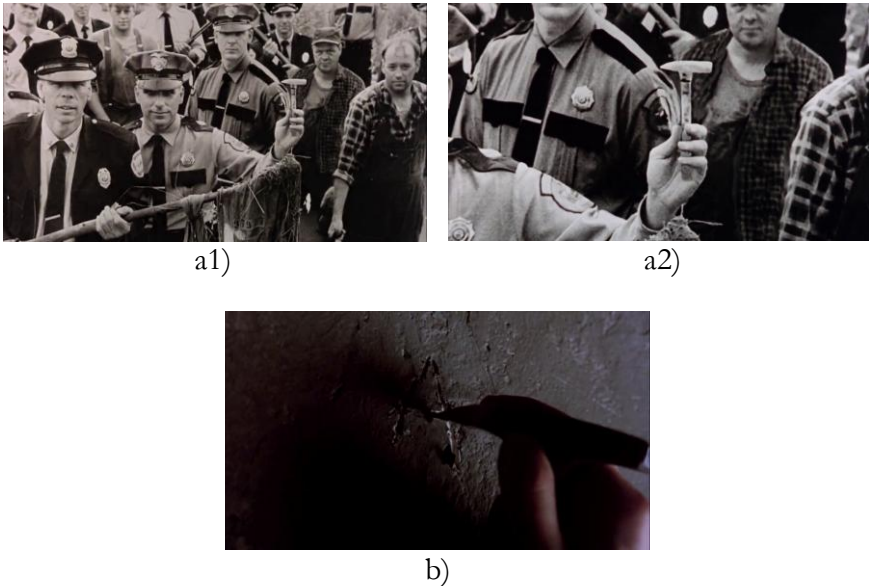b)

Figure 14. Flashback in *The Shawshank Redemption* (1994)

Furthermore, this anchor is loaded with meaning that endows it with a poetic dimension. As the flashback goes on, Red says: "Geology is the study of pressure and time. That's all it takes, really. *Pressure and time*". This phrase gives the key to understand the rock hammer as standing for the idea of "(hopeful) perseverance", which

could also be defined as "pressure sustained through time". In the present, once Andy has escaped, the worn-down hammer stands for the fruit of that perseverance, which in this case is freedom. And in the period of time narrated in the flashback, which is that of Andy's silent and constant effort to reach his goal, the hammer represents the idea of active perseverance and hope. The rock hammer functioning as a narrative anchor to set up the past narrative space is thus not a gratuitous choice: on the contrary, the object performs that role because it has story-specific meaning and it contributes to the construction of the story in a broad sense.

3.3.1.3 AUDITORY SPACE BUILDERS

Auditory cues (sounds and music, and even words taken as auditory stimuli) may also perform the role of narrative anchors, just as the abovementioned visual cues do. Although they are not as common as their visual counterparts, one can find some interesting examples of auditory space builders in film. In one of the flashbacks in *Ordinary People* (1980) (see Figure 3, above), the mother's laugh in the present serves as a space builder that activates the narrative space of the past, and thus works as a narrative anchor. It is not just an ambient sound that contributes to the realism of the scene, but an element with a particular narrative function. Integrated in a POV shot, the laugh is made salient by becoming Conrad's focus of attention, and then, by following Conrad's gaze and through the POV editing structure, the camera and the viewer end up attending to the laugh as well in a scene of blended joint attention.

The repetition of the laugh (or rather, its continuous presence in both narrative spaces), turns it into a space builder for the past narrative space, linking it to the present. Once the past is introduced, a series of cross-mappings are established between past and present: among others, there is an identity connection between the two Conrads in the two spaces, as well as between the two mothers and the two laughs. Also, a time relation links both spaces. As in all the visual examples of the previous section, the reappearance of the laugh in the past triggers a fundamental cross-mapping that makes this sound a bridge between present and past. Moreover, the POV

structure linked to Conrad's perspective and the echo effect with which the laugh is heard in the past lead us to understand that past scene as belonging to Conrad's memories.

Similarly, one of the flashbacks in *Ray* (2004), a film about musician Ray Charles' life, is triggered by a piano song that Ray is listening to (00:21:00-00:23:10). This song makes him recall the first time he played the piano. As Figure 15 shows, Ray's attention is drawn to the music being played at the bar. An extreme close-up of Ray's ear (b1) indicates that the music is heard from Ray's auditory perspective (this would be a case of secondary internal auricularization; cf. chapter 4, section 4.2.3). Through editing, the viewer's attention is called upon the song being played, and thus he attends to it in parallel to Ray. Once the music is made salient, it can work as a narrative anchor that activates the past narrative space. Actually, as was the case with Beth's laugh in *Ordinary People*, the music is not interrupted while the transition between present and past takes place, but rather it keeps playing and thus bridges more clearly the two narrative spaces. Interestingly, although in the present Ray cannot see the piano due to his blindness, the camera shows it to the viewer (b2). This way, by making the source of the music visible, the song is consolidated as an anchor in the present. Furthermore, the presence of the piano and the musician playing it in the present allows for a cross-mapping between them and the piano man recalled by Ray in the flashback (of course, as in the examples previously analyzed, many more cross-mappings are established: identity connections, time relations, etc.). Finally, the leap to the past is also visually cued by a fade to red from the present, and then a fade from red to the scene of the past (c1). Every flashback in *Ray* employs this cue, and so the repetition of the same transitional pattern throughout the film helps the viewer recognize the following scene as a flashback. Nevertheless, the use of the fade in the flashback transition does not mean that the scene could do without the music as narrative anchor. That is, it could do without it, but the narration would lose part of its richness since the piano melody contributes to the construction of Ray Charles' story, a story which is precisely closely linked to music and piano playing.

a)   b1)

b2)   c1)

c2)

Figure 15. Flashback in *Ray* (2004)

Before closing this section, I will discuss one last example to show how the same auditory narrative anchor operates throughout a single film. In *Casablanca* (1942), the song "As time goes by" is heard at various moments in the movie. But it is not just a background melody: on the contrary, it acquires story-specific meaning and it works as a space builder and a "place-holder" for a particular narrative space: that of Rick and Ilsa's romance in Paris. That space is not set up "in one go" but progressively elaborated throughout the film, and the song plays an important role there. It is first played by Sam in Casablanca (in the present narrative space) at Ilsa's request,

but as a result Rick comes in annoyed and tells Sam to stop, only to be immediately shocked when he finds Ilsa in front of him (00:30:45-00:32:55). At this point we know nothing about Rick and Ilsa's past relationship, but we see how the song seems to have reopened an old wound. An unknown narrative space is thus insinuated through the song, which functions as a narrative anchor.

The second time it is played, the song works as a space builder that triggers the flashback to the Paris romance (00:35:30-00:46:20) (for an analysis of this scene in terms of Rick's double viewpoint, see chapter 4, section 4.3.2). Alone in the café, once everybody else is gone, Rick and Sam's conversation revolves around the song: "What's that you're playing? — A little something of my own — Stop it. You know *what I want to hear* — No, I don't — You played *it* for her. You can play *it* for me — I don't think I can remember... — If she can stand *it*, I can. Play *it* — Yes, boss". Sam plays "As time goes by", and the song gives way to the past narrative space as it evolves into a symphonic variation of the melody, which at a given time merges with the first notes of "La Marseillaise". The zoom-in that narrows Rick's close-up and the transitional dissolve also contribute to activate that past space, but the song provides the scene with specific meaning that the other devices could not convey. The song's lyrics[31] play an essential role in this respect, since they articulate an idea which is central to the story narrated: "some things (fundamental things) survive the passing of time". More specifically, it could be expressed as "fundamental things survive the passing of time in our memory". Every time they hear the song, both Ilsa and Rick are prompted to recall Paris and their love affair (the song is a "place-holder" for that narrative space), although the memories of what is now ended and gone have a bitter taste in the present. Indeed, Rick's attitude in the present while he listens to the song shows that it is reopening an old wound, just as it had happened in the previous scene upon meeting Ilsa again.

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[31] Note part of the lyrics of the song, which contribute to make it a meaningful anchor: "You must remember this/A kiss is just a kiss/A sigh is just a sigh/The fundamental things apply/As time goes by/And when two lovers woo/They still say 'I love you'/On that you can rely/No matter what the future brings/As time goes by".

The song is played once more by Sam *in* the flashback, that is, in the past narrative space (00:41:00-00:41:55). This time it is played for both Rick and Ilsa in the midst of their affair. However, Ilsa's attitude in the scene is slightly reserved and she seems worried, as if she were hiding something. On the one hand, in the flashback we come to identify the song with the Paris narrative space, and more specifically with the protagonists' love story. But, on the other hand, the song also acquires tragic overtones in the flashback, for the Paris fragment ends with the separation of the lovers when Ilsa abandons Rick without explaining why. After the flashback is closed, we go back to the same scene at the café in the present, where Rick is drinking his sorrows away. A few notes of "As time goes by" are still heard, played by Sam. At this point, the song stands for heartbreak and grief precisely because Rick's love for Ilsa is one of those fundamental things that cannot be forgotten, and it hurts all the more to see it betrayed and killed. The meaning of the song in the story thus emerges by connecting all of its appearances, both in the present and in the past narrative spaces. Also, the cross-mappings established between past and present situate the events in Paris as a cause for Rick's grief in the present, and so these links contribute to the elaboration of the past narrative space and to the emergence of the story altogether.

The flashback leaves some questions unanswered, but the main one is why did Ilsa abandon Rick. This portion of the past narrative space gradually comes into light through the characters' dialogues and actions in present Casablanca. Eventually, Rick learns that Ilsa left him because she discovered that her husband, Czech Resistance leader Victor Laszlo, was alive. Rick forgives her, and agrees to help her and Victor getting the letters of transit they need to escape to the US. However, the love triangle complicates things, as Laszlo, upon Rick's initial resistance to give him the letters, offers Rick to leave with Ilsa in order to save her. Rick, on the other hand, lies to the French Police saying he wants the letters for Ilsa and himself, and also lies to Ilsa making her believe that they will get back together. It is not until the last scene at the airport that Rick reveals his true intentions: he wants Ilsa to leave with Laszlo and be safe. At this point, a variation of "As time goes by" is played as background

music (01:32:45-01:34:05). The song evokes Paris once more, but that narrative space has now been fully elaborated and is no longer a space of betrayal: Ilsa did not stop loving Rick, but had to act out of loyalty to her husband. Paris is now a narrative space of everlasting love and complete happiness, and that is why, with the song playing in the background, Rick tells Ilsa: "We will always have Paris". The song now fully anchors the idea of "fundamental things that endure the passing of time": what Ilsa and Rick lived in Paris will survive the test of time, it will remain alive.

Functioning as a narrative anchor, the song in *Casablanca* performs a fundamental role in the process of story-construction throughout the film. It serves as a space builder for the past narrative space, and it also evokes that same narrative space every time it is played in the movie. Furthermore, the reappearance of the song prompts for cross-mappings between the Paris space and the present time in Casablanca, and those connections between both spaces contribute to the configuration of the final emergent story.

All in all, what the examples analyzed throughout this section show is that film narratives employ space builders of different kinds to set up the narrative space of the past in a flashback scene. The past then becomes the object of attention in the blended joint attention scene: the camera, the viewer, and (often) the character(s) turn their attention from the present narrative space to the past space being activated. That past space, then, can only exist in the blend, both as the object of attention in the blended joint attention triangle and as the product of a process of time compression (see chapter 5 for an extended analysis of time compression in flashbacks). Indeed, flashback scenes consist of a narrative leap from the narrative present to a particular previous moment in the story (i.e., "the past"). But neither the character nor the viewer have to go through all the events and the time elapsed between the present and the past moments in the story (Fauconnier & Turner, 2002: 317). The flashback transition (that is, the space builder which sets up the past space and gives us access to it) takes us directly back to a particular moment in the story. However, that new narrative space does not come out of nowhere: it only exists in a blended space, it only emerges as a result of

integrating in the blend this new narrative space with the present narrative space and, most importantly, the relation between them, for the past can only be so in relation to the present.

3.3.2   CONTEXT

An objection that could be raised against the visual and auditory space builders discussed above is that, unlike verbal space builders, they have a rather "open" meaning. That is, "in 1929" has a defined referent in principle, but the image of a bench or a dripping sink has no particular symbolic ties with the notion of "past"—that is, this kind of image does not *mean* anything. However, as Fauconnier explains (1997: 37), not even linguistic expressions have fixed meanings: "[a] language expression (…) does not have a meaning in itself; rather, it has a *meaning potential*, and it is only within a complete discourse and in context that meaning will actually be produced". Thus the same reasoning, and even to a greater extent, can be applied to non-verbal space builders: they are understood as anchors to a past narrative space by virtue of the narrative context. That is, the cues that introduce a flashback are not loaded with the full meaning of the retrospection scene; they do not encapsulate the meaning of the whole narrative space they are activating. Rather, they set up a narrative space that will be gradually elaborated and which will also acquire meaning within the story by means of the cross-mappings established with other narrative spaces. Sometimes there is even no particular expression (or audiovisual element, in the case of film) that functions as a space builder, and "the set-up [of the narrative space] is implied in the structure of the space rather than performed through a specific expression" (Dancygier, 2008: 56). Speaking about literary retrospections, Dancygier (2008: 58-59) states that "a flashback may appear in the text without any specific temporal space builder suggesting a specific past moment, but once it starts, the reader will gradually receive the information needed to place it within the story". This is precisely also the case with many film flashbacks, which the viewer understands as such because of the narrative context and of the information that the flashback itself offers as it is developed.

Furthermore, as already mentioned above, Messaris (1994) asserts that the explanatory burden of transitions and other explicit devices

has been reduced and transferred instead to the narrative context. This is clear in flashback examples from relatively recent films, such as *Ordinary People* (1980), *The Social Network* (2010) or *Manchester by the Sea* (2016). In *Ordinary People*, upon finding out that his friend Karen has committed suicide, Conrad suffers a breakdown and a series of flashes follow of both his last conversation with Karen and the traumatizing boating accident where his brother died (01:36:10-01:38:45). At other times in the movie uncued flashes of the boat tragedy also appear, and it is the narrative context what gives us the key for their comprehension. *Manchester by the Sea*, on the other hand, relies heavily on narrative context to make the narrative pieces fit together: flashbacks are not cued at all, and jumps between present and past are constant. The film tells the story of Lee Chandler, a brooding and solitary man who must take care of his nephew after his brother's death. He goes back to his hometown for this purpose, and the return brings back to him the memories and the pain of a family tragedy. Information from that past narrative space is revealed little by little in the film through a series of flashbacks which the viewer comes to understand thanks to the narrative context. For example, in a scene at the beginning of the film (00:16:20-00:20:10) we learn that someone very close to Lee has died (although it is not until late in the scene that we know it is Lee's older brother, Joe), and we are also informed that the doctor that used to treat Joe, Dr. Bethany, is on maternity leave. The following scene is a flashback (00:20:10-00:22:55), but no transitional cue is employed: the viewer understands that it belongs to the past because he makes a number of inferences (in this scene Joe is alive, and Dr. Bethany is informing him and his family of the disease that he suffers). At a different moment later in the film, Lee's look "into space" in the present (around 00:55:30 and 00:58:45) leads us to understand the related flashback as a memory of his, but even in this case the retrospection scene is understood as such because of the narrative context, since several uncued flashbacks have been already introduced in the film and the viewer can thus recognize a pattern. Likewise, in *The Social Network* the narrative leaps constantly between present and past, and it is because of the narrative context that flashbacks are successfully understood. The film tells the story of the creation of Facebook and the conflicts that arose along the way between the people involved. Thus, the past narrative space

comprises the process of invention, founding and development of the network until it becomes a multi-million dollar business, while the present revolves around Mark Zuckerberg being sued and the deposition hearings which are taking place in two lawsuits. The film jumps back and forth between present and past, and narrative context is enough to understand those narrative leaps. As in *Manchester by the Sea*, some flashbacks are slightly cued, like when the narration of events in the deposition leads to an enactment of the facts in a flashback, but in broad terms narrative context is the key.

One of the narrative strategies used for accommodating new information into the narrative context is erotetic narration, which, as explained in section 3.1.1, consists of a question-answer logic. The erotetic model of narrative is based on the process of raising and fulfilling expectations: the viewer expects answers for the continuous questions that the film poses (Carroll, 1996b: 89). According to Carroll (1988b, 1996b, 2008), there are two different types of questions, macro-questions and micro-questions, which are grouped into two corresponding narrative levels. Macro-questions are those which drive the whole film, and thus take part in large-scale narrative coherence. Micro-questions, on the other hand, participate in small-scale narrative coherence by connecting two or a few scenes or sequences which are usually temporally proximate in the film. The answers to micro-questions eventually contribute to answering macro-questions. Furthermore, there are many ways a film can raise, sustain and answer questions, such as dialogue, narrative voices, events taking place in the scene, variable framing, etc. For instance, a common example of micro-question/answer logic is the POV shot, where a character's look off-screen raises a perceptual inquiry (what is the character looking at?) which the viewer expects to be (and usually is) answered in the following shot.

Flashbacks also fit into this question-answer system of narration, as Carroll explains (2008: 139): "the temporal ordering of the telling of the tale is generally not divorced from the erotetic structure of the movie. (…) [F]lashbacks and flashforwards typically play a role of raising, sustaining, or answering questions". Many times flashbacks serve the function of filling a gap in the narrative, but they also serve

to pose new questions or sustain some already raised. For instance, as mentioned above, the first flashback in *Hiroshima, Mon Amour* (1959) poses questions that the narrative answers later on through other flashbacks. Fundamentally, flashbacks highlight cause-consequence relationships between present and past events in the story, and in that sense they work well in the erotetic narration system because of the fundamental role of the cause-effect logic in such a system:

> [i]t is primarily the causal inputs, broadly constructed, in erotetic narratives that raise the presiding macro-questions and the pressing micro-questions whose answers secure closure in typical movies. A character forms an intention, has a desire, a need, a purpose, a goal, or a plan; or she has a commitment or an ideal, or makes a promise. These motivational states comprise part of the causal conditions of her action. They also generate questions about whether her intentions, desires, motives, purposes, goals and/or plans will be realized. (...) Of course, not only causal inputs may raise macro-questions, but also effects. Presented forcefully with certain effects, (...), we will expect answers about their origins. (...) In short, any question that arises from the causal nexus of the story can function as an ingredient in the erotetic structure of the movie. (Carroll, 2008: 141)

This primacy of causation and characters' motives in a narrative is also highlighted by Dancygier (2012a: 49), who further states that it is these two ingredients, and not sequentiality, what "glues" the story together. Indeed, in the process of watching a film, or once it has ended, the viewer can hardly reconstruct the whole sequence of events in the story (Bordwell, 2011b), but he will likely remember the causal connections between sets of events as well as the characters' motivations around those facts.

An excellent example of the fundamental role of context and causal relations in the viewer's comprehension of cinematic mainstream narratives is found in *Arrival* (2016). Louise, the film's protagonist, is a linguist recruited by the military in order to communicate with the aliens from a series of mysterious spacecrafts that have landed on Earth. At the beginning of the film (00:01:20-00:04:10), after a shot of an empty living room with a large window overlooking a lake, there are a series of scenes of Louise with her

newborn baby, later on a little girl. Also, in an extreme close-up the camera shows a golden ring in Louise's hand, from which we infer that she is married. In the following scenes, the girl keeps growing up until she gets very sick and finally dies at a young age. Louise's voice-over comments on these scenes ("I used to think this was the beginning of your story. Memory is a strange thing. It doesn't work like I thought it did. We are so bound by time, by its order") and she finally introduces the topic of the aliens' arrival ("But now I'm not so sure I believe in beginnings and endings. There are days that define your story beyond your life. Like the day they arrived"). She goes to work at the university, and there she learns the news of the spacecrafts that have landed in different places of the world. Then, back home (the house by the lake we just saw at the beginning) she talks to her mother on the phone: "You know me. I'm about the same… Mom, I'm fine" (00:07:30-00:08:30). These phrases, together with the gloomy atmosphere at Louise's house, her sad look and her loneliness lead us to interpret that something serious has taken place in her life, and thus her mother is worried for her. In other words, the state of things in Louise's present life (loneliness, apparent melancholy…) is comprehended as a consequence of the events just seen in the assumed flashbacks of Louise's daughter, Hannah. Furthermore, a couple of comments from Louise during those scenes also lead us to interpret them as belonging to the past: "I *remember* moments in the middle", "And this *was* the end". Thus, the scenes encapsulating Hannah's life are taken as an answer to the question of what is the cause of Louise's present mood, and the answer is found by considering those scenes as flashbacks and attributing Louise's melancholy to the tragedy of her daughter's death. Certainly, new questions emerge in the present, as to where is the girl's father (Louise's husband), and we expect the film to answer that later on.

The story goes on, and the military asks for Louise's help to communicate with the aliens. In order to do so, she studies their language and eventually learns it. However, as Louise finds out during the process, this language is not bounded by time, and thus by learning the language Louise also acquires the capacity to perceive

time like the aliens do: as non-linear[32]. She sees everything "in the present", in non-sequentiality, and so she can now know ("remember") the future. Hence, the assumed flashbacks of Hannah's life at the beginning of the film were not so: the facts shown in those scenes do not belong to the past, but to the future; they are flashforwards. Later on in the film there are a few more scenes of Hannah's life (for instance, 01:33:10-01:35:20), but we now know that they are part of the future: she *will* be born and she *will* also die young. Nevertheless, Louise "sees" all that in the present as part of a unitary stream of time which is actually "timeless".

All in all, the film plays a trick on the viewer by relying on erotetic logic, which is expected to be subconsciously applied by spectators as they watch the film. Upon seeing the initial scenes that summarize Hannah's life, we try to adjust this new information into the narrative context. The ensuing scenes of Louise's lonely life lead us to connect them with the assumed flashbacks through a cause-consequence relationship, which is a very logical link between a daughter's death and a mother's sorrow. Once the narrative secures this connection in the viewer's mind, it can reverse it later on in the film by revealing the "gift" that the aliens have given Louise through their language. From that perspective, phrases like "I *remember* moments in the middle" or "And this *was* the end" take a new meaning: this is certainly said by Louise once Hannah has died, but the viewer thinks at first that she died before the aliens arrived. At the end of the film we learn that the aliens arrived first, and Hannah was born after that event took place. Those phrases still work as space builders of a past narrative space, but context tells us where that space is located with respect to the rest of the story.

Certainly, contextual information in the process of understanding a film is not limited to the story itself, that is, to the events taking place

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[32] Behind this conception of languages lies the notion of "linguistic relativism", or the Sapir-Whorf hypothesis, which argues that the language that an individual speaks determines his view of the world and even shapes his thinking processes (cf. Bussmann et al., 1996: 414-415). Thus, according to this hypothesis, Louise is capable of perceiving time and thinking about it like the aliens do because she has learned their language.

in the narrative story world. Context in a broader sense is also essential to successfully comprehend a movie: as Persson (2003: 36) points out, "[g]enre (Western, drama, or thriller) and discursive modes (information, education, entertainment, documentary, art) are often part of the viewing context for a given film". Narrative genre is one of the reasons why, for instance, in the abovementioned flashback in *The Help* (2011) we do not take the girl sitting on the bench as, say, Skeeter's clone. That may be expected in a science fiction film, but not in this civil rights drama. However, it should be clarified that contextual information (in all its levels) is not something added on top of everything else at the end of the film watching process. That is, there is not an established hierarchy in which cinematic cues come first, and then context is added. Rather, cues and context are interconnected and interact continuously. This idea is related to Persson's (2003) proposal of six levels of filmic meaning, which range from the most basic level of "premeaning" up to the final level of interpretation, going through different levels of comprehension. As Persson notes,

> [m]eanings are not constructed in isolation from each other. Levels presumably interact in complex ways. In many cases, the lower level of coherence must be in place before the spectator can move on to the next [bottom-up processes]. (...) At the same time, high-level assumptions and hypotheses certainly guide the understanding of details [top-down processes]. (2003: 36-37)

Thus, bottom-up and top-down processes interact and influence each other.

3.3.3   INSIDE THE PAST

Once the past is set as the object of attention in the blended joint attention triangle, and once the transition to the past has taken place, the camera and the viewer find themselves immersed in the past events (sometimes for a while, some other times just for a moment). But this process of inhabiting the past has its own peculiarities. On the one hand, the camera moves freely in the past narrative space even in those flashbacks that depict a character's memory, which are usually not restricted to the character's optical and auditory perspective and knowledge (cf. chapter 4, section 4.2). Indeed, the

character appears in such a way as if he would be "seeing himself" in his memories, a feature which does not match the actual functioning of our memory. Regarding classical Hollywood cinema, Bordwell et al. (1985:43) point out that

> [e]xtended flashback sequences usually include material that the remembering character could not have witnessed or known. Character memory is simply a convenient immediate motivation for a shift in chronology; once the shift is accomplished, there are no constant cues to remind us that we are supposedly in someone's mind.

The flashback sequence in *Casablanca* (1942), for instance, bound to Rick's recollection, shows images of Nazi tanks, planes, etc. approaching Paris which cannot belong to Rick's memory, because he was not present in all those places witnessing all those scenes. Actually, the viewer sees the Nazis approaching Paris *before* Rick and Ilsa learn of their arrival through the newspapers and the loudspeaker cars that go through the city (cf. Greenberg & Gabbard, 1999). Similarly, in *Citizen Kane* (1941) Leland's narration in the present gives way to the famous flashback (00:49:25-00:54:40) that encapsulates the evolution of the Kane couple through a series of breakfast scenes. Naturally, Leland was not sitting at the table with Mr. and Mrs. Kane in all those breakfasts: he is telling what he knew and can remember about the couple, and then the flashback is an enactment (and also an extension) of the information Leland is giving to the journalist interviewing him. This "independence" of memory flashbacks is not limited to the classical Hollywood period, but is a common feature of many memory flashbacks, and particularly of those featured in mainstream narrative cinema (that is, those films which conform to a classic narrative model and on which this work focuses). In general, memory flashbacks in this kind of movies have the camera moving freely, detached from what would have been the character's actual position and optical perspective in the past events remembered. Instances of this are the abovementioned flashbacks in *Ordinary People* (1980), *Ray* (2004), *The Help* (2011) and *Begin Again* (2013), to name a few. Also, usually the retrospection scene is not bounded by the knowledge of the character in question.

However, this is not to say that memory flashbacks are completely detached from the present narrative space nor from the recollecting character. Well crafted flashbacks successfully combine the distance from past events marked by the present, the character's past experience of those events, an optical and auditory "independence" from the character, etc. (see chapter 4, section 4.3.2 for a detailed analysis of the character's double viewpoint in memory flashbacks). But as Bordwell (2004: 216) states, this does not pose any problem for the viewer:

> [i]f we viewers realize the anomalies of flashback information only after we reflect on them, perhaps during normal viewing they simply don't register (at least in most of us). That may have to do with our pursuit of relevant narrative information, which is likely to involve causal/temporal relations rather than details of how knowledge may be restricted. And it is possible that, given the constraints of time-bound, mildly attentive viewing, recalling who's telling the story and what she or he could know at each instant has no payoff for comprehension.

Ultimately, a given flashback makes sense because all the instances of viewpoint profiled in it are blended at the level of an implicit stance responsible for the orchestration of the whole narrative by means of a unifying narrative viewpoint (cf. chapter 4, particularly sections 4.1.2 and 4.2.6).

Certainly, as mentioned above, the past can only be understood as such when considered in relation to the present narrative space. In that relationship between both narrative spaces, the present narrative space is that of Viewpoint: "the space from which others are accessed and structured or set up" (Fauconnier, 1997: 49). On the other hand, the past narrative space, accessed from the present, is that of Focus: "the space currently being structured internally—the space, so to speak, upon which attention is currently focused" (Fauconnier, 1997: 49). At some point, however, Viewpoint may be shifted to the past narrative space, which then becomes both Focus and Viewpoint: the past space is being structured, it is in focus, but it is not built from the perspective of the present space any more. When the past narrative space functions as Viewpoint, other narrative spaces may be set up

based on it. This is the case of "nested flashbacks", for instance: retrospection scenes triggered within other retrospection scenes. An example of this is found in the flashback scene in *Big Fish* (2003) analyzed above (00:08:25-00:13:30), where adult Will in the present recalls a moment in his childhood. A flashback is introduced, which shows Will's father telling him bedtime stories. This scene belonging to a past narrative space gives way, in turn, to another flashback which is an enactment of the story Will's father is narrating. In this case, the present space starts as Viewpoint, and also as Base ("a starting point for the construction to which it is always possible to return"; Fauconnier, 1997: 49). The first flashback is then the Focus space, but also becomes the Viewpoint space for the second flashback when it is introduced. This second flashback then becomes the Focus. Finally, in one last twist, this second flashback becomes Viewpoint for a brief flashforward within it. This Russian-doll structure is closed by means of a cut from a door closing in the past to a door opening in the present, and thus we are taken back to the present narrative space, that is, to the Base, which is also Focus and Viewpoint again.

Nevertheless, in many cases flashbacks keep their status as Focus spaces while still being dependent on the present as Viewpoint space. That is, the focus is on the past narrative space, but it is a space accessed and set up from the Viewpoint space of the present. This link between both narrative spaces is sustained either by audiovisual cues that mark the flashback scene from beginning to end (e.g. blurred images, distorted focus (and sound), extreme close-ups, canted camera angles, etc.; a clear example of this is found in the recurring flashbacks in the *Bourne* saga[33], which depict amnesiac Jason Bourne's fragmented memories of his past as a CIA agent (cf. chapter 6, section 6.1)) or by the reappearance from time to time of the space builders that triggered the flashback (the usual example is the recurrence in the flashback of the narrating voice that introduced it, as in *All About Eve* (1950) and *Sunset Blvd.* (1950)).

Still, it is also possible to find flashbacks located at the other end of this continuum (the one that goes from full dependence to

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[33] Specifically, I am referring to the first three films of the series: *The Bourne Identity* (2002), *The Bourne Supremacy* (2004), and *The Bourne Ultimatum* (2007).

complete detachment of the past from the present): the flashback may grow fully independent from the present narrative space up to the point of not being understood as past any longer (as is the case of one of the long flashbacks in *Jane Eyre* (2011), for instance; cf. chapter 6, section 6.2). In such cases the past narrative space is both that of Focus and Viewpoint, for it is the space being elaborated but it is not constructed from the perspective of the present space (thus, Viewpoint has shifted from the present to the past narrative space). But, in any case, the present space continues to function as Base, and the narrative can go back to that particular space at any time without difficulty.

A couple of remarks must be made regarding the position of the viewer in the development of the flashback: on the one hand, and contrary to real life joint attention, the viewer cannot go back to the present narrative space (or to the gazer in the present in the case of memory flashbacks) whenever he wants. Going back to the Base space (i.e. the present) is a very simple operation, but one upon which the viewer cannot decide: he is always subjected to the cinematic narrative's rules, and above all to the camera's "decisions".

On the other hand, although the viewer is not limited by his egocentric perspective on events as he is in ordinary perceptual experience (Carroll & Seeley, 2013: 55), the camera's free movement in the flashback does not mean that the viewer occupies with it the position of an invisible or ideal observer. The ideal observer model sustains that "a narrative film represents story events through the vision of an invisible or imaginary witness" (Bordwell, 1995 [1985]: 9). That is, camera movements and editing would represent and ideal witness as if he were actually present at the scene, in a real-life manner: "[c]amera and microphone become anthropomorphic, stationed like a person before a real phenomenon. The imaginary observer becomes a subject before the objective world of the story actions" (Bordwell, 1995 [1985]: 11). However, as Bordwell aptly points out,

> staging an event to be filmed is no less part of fictional moviemaking than is camera placement or editing. The imaginary witness account forgets that in cinema, fictional narrative begins not with the framing

of a preexistent action but with the construction of that action to start with (…). All film techniques, even those involving the "profilmic event", function narrationally, constructing the story world for specific effects. (…) [T]his impression of an invisible observer facing an autonomous world is an effect of the film's construction. The invisible observer is not the *basis* of film style but only one *figure* of style. The observer's ubiquity, the verisimilitude of perception, and the very sense that this filmed world could be known independently—all are formal effects. (Bordwell, 1995 [1985]: 11-12)

Thus, the viewer does not occupy a privileged position within the fictional world of the film. However, as Oakley and Tobin (2012: 81) explain, if we consider the blended-joint-attention conceptual network as a whole (and not just the virtual space of the story world), the viewer does actually hold an advantaged position, and that position is "within the common ground that regards the fictional world and its characters as its object of attention". It is the viewer's position in the Ground (the mental space where the participants in a film-viewing scenario belong, as explained in section 3.2.2) within the blended joint attention triangle what makes him a privileged observer.

One last point before concluding this section is how flashbacks are closed. As mentioned above, going back from the Focus space (i.e. the past narrative space, which sometimes also becomes the space of Viewpoint) to the Base (i.e. the present narrative space, which is also the Viewpoint space for the past in focus) is a simple cognitive operation, given that the present space has already been established as Base before the introduction of the flashback. That is, the present is a narrative space which has already been activated in the viewer's mind within the narrative network the film sets up. Thus, no particular cinematic cues are needed in order to mark the transition to a narrative space already known by (or at least familiar to) the viewer. In going back to the Base, Focus is shifted from the past narrative space to the present, for it is now the present narrative space the one being structured. Also, if the past had become the Viewpoint space (i.e. the flashback was no longer depending on the present), viewpoint is shifted as well to the present narrative space.

a1)   a2)

b)

Figure 16. Flashback closing in *The Help* (2011)

Of course, not all flashbacks are closed in the same way: some use a simple cut, others resort to a dissolve (often paralleling the flashback opening), others employ narrative anchors, etc. Many of these variations are of a stylistic kind, although they may also contribute to the construction of meaning in the narrated story. For instance, the flashback in *The Help* (2011) analyzed above (cf. Figure 1) is closed through a dissolve that connects similar events in the past and in the present. At the beginning of the scene, in the present, Skeeter was walking down a path in her backyard, and the sight of a bench had made her stop and recall. Now, near its closure, the flashback shows Skeeter and Constantine walking down a path in the backyard as well (shot (a1) in Figure 16). Then, while the two women walk out of frame (a2), the past scene dissolves into the present where adult Skeeter is seen walking down the very same path (b). The presence of the path is not merely accessory, it is not just a stylistic device that makes the scene look nice. Rather, it is an element that meaningfully connects present and past: the path functions as an anchor for the idea of "life" (LIFE IS A PATH and LIFE IS A JOURNEY are actually common metaphors to talk about life in terms of a

journey towards a destination or an endpoint; cf. for instance Lakoff & Turner, 1989). When Skeeter stops in the middle of the path in the first place, before the flashback, she recalls some things Constantine taught her about life, about being strong and brave, and avoiding self-pity. At the end of the flashback, teenager Skeeter walks down the path of life reassured by Constantine's words (a2), and so does adult Skeeter back in the present (b). Thus, the path links past and present and tells us that Skeeter will continue to live as Constantine taught her.

In conclusion, and going back to the central idea of this chapter, films are attentional engines that guide the viewer by means of a system of cues which contribute to the activation and construction of narrative spaces, and which also trigger connections between elements in those various spaces. Ultimately, the film's emergent story is the result of a series of blends and connections between spaces, prompted by cinematic elements. Dancygier (2012b) explains this process of story construction for literary texts, but the same model can be applied to analyze the emergent story in film narratives:

> the story is the final result of several modes of interaction with the text [or film, in this case]—reading the words [and watching and hearing the film], activating the frames, searching for correlates in one's experience, making cross-space connections, blending narrative spaces, establishing identities, constructing tentative scenarios, storing them in memory, revising them as new events are narrated, responding emotionally, etc, etc, etc. (Dancygier, 2012b: 54)

Thus, although the emergent story is built upon the varied multimodal components of filmic discourse, it really only exists as such in the viewer's mind (cf. Dancygier, 2012b: 57). However, in the emergence of that final story, sequentiality of events is not as essential as it may seem. Actually, as Dancygier (2012b: 56) points out, breaking sequentiality in narratives is the norm rather than the exception, and reconstructing the sequential chain of events is not the most important device to ensure the proper understanding of a story. Instead, as Dancygier also states (2012a), it is causality and the characters' motives which are central to narrative comprehension. Flashbacks, then, make perfect sense to the viewer not because he

places them accurately within the temporal sequence of events that make up the story, but because flashbacks are connected in multiple ways to other narrative spaces in a film's narrative, and so they fit coherently into the logic of the story.

4

VIEWPOINT COMPRESSION

4.1 FILM NARRATIVES, NARRATORS AND POINT OF VIEW

4.1.1   FILM AND THE EXTERNAL NARRATOR

One of the fundamental questions posed in the study of cinema as a type of narrative discourse has always been that of who narrates a particular film. The tools narratology offers for the study of literary texts have been applied extensively to the analysis of film narratives, and certainly the fruits of it have been many (cf. Gaudreault, 1988; Stam et al., 1996; Pérez-Bowie, 2008). Regarding the figure of the narrator in cinema (the extradiegetic narrator, that is, not the narrative voice of a character), a variety of theorizations and nomenclatures have been proposed, such as cinematic narrator, fundamental narrator, external narrator, intrinsic narrator, etc. (Pérez-Bowie, 2008: 40). However, there is still no consensus in the definition of that agent who would be ultimately responsible for the narration of a film.

Some authors (Chatman, 1978; Gaudreault & Jost, 1990; Gunning, 1991; and others) systematically apply the theoretical apparatus of narratology to film, and argue that the figure of the narrator is essential for the existence of a given narrative. Alternatively, those theorists who take a cognitive approach to film (Branigan, 1984; Bordwell, 1995 [1985]; and others) consider that there is no such thing as a cinematic narrator and that facts "tell themselves" in film (cf. Pérez-Bowie, 2008: 40-41). Before going any further into explaining the different positions, it is necessary to consider a fundamental distinction: the dichotomy between *telling* and *showing*, between *diegesis* and *mimesis*. Understood in classical terms, *diegesis* stands for the recounting of events, for their verbal exposition, whereas *mimesis* is the unmediated representation of events, an imitation (mimicry) of reality (Rimmon-Kenan, 1991 [1983]: 106-107).

In this sense, cinema is much more mimetic than diegetic, although it also employs verbal narration in the form of voice-over narrators, for instance, and thus it is mediated in some manner. Even camera and montage parameters function as mediators in filmic narratives (cf. Kuhn, 2009; Kuhn & Schmidt, 2014). But if we take film's nature to be essentially mimetic, does this necessarily imply the non-existence of an extradiegetic narrator?

On the one hand, most of the narratology-oriented theorists take into account cinema's particular nature, and their discussions about the extradiegetic narrator in film usually consider the mimetic dimension of the medium. Gaudreault and Jost (1990: 55-56), for instance, speak of a "mega-narrator" who employs two ways of communicating: "monstration" (the mimetic level) and "narration" (which corresponds to film editing). Gunning (1991: 17-18), in a similar way, says that the filmic narrator is responsible for the process of "narrativization", consisting in organizing the selected mimetic elements that compose a film and turn them into a narrative (cf. also Stam et al., 1996: 111-112). Chatman (1990), for his part, talks about the cinematic narrator as the "sender" of the message, but this does not necessarily mean *telling* the story in verbal form. Actually, the cinematic narrator is "the overall agent that does the showing", and it controls both the visual and the auditory channels (Chatman, 1990: 134). Finally, Robert Stam reviews all these theoretical proposals and points out that they are missing a fundamental element: the "mimetic stratum", that is, the consideration of the fictional world as something "real", not as a discursive representation. For Stam, the impersonal narrator both creates that fictional world and refers to it as if it were autonomous and pre-existed the act of creation (Stam et al., 1996: 117). However, his view diverges from Gaudreault's at the "commentary" or "narration" level, for all the elements from the "monstration" level (camera work, lighting, color, etc.) can also have narrative functions (Stam et al., 1996: 116-117).

On the other hand, there is a particular theoretical current which defends that there is not an extradiegetic narrator in cinema, and that such literary figure is unnecessary in film. Bordwell (2008), one of the most influent authors of the cognitive trend, offers a detailed

reasoning of his position. He claims that a film should not be understood as a message from a sender to a receiver (following the classic communication model), but instead as a narrative process which is built up by cues that the movie itself presents to the viewer. Cinematic narration is, then, "the process whereby the film guides the spectator's construction of a story out of cues" (Bordwell, 2008: 130). But who is behind that narrational process, who "creates" it? The filmmakers (Bordwell, 2008: 123). They are the real authors of the film, and responsible for the production and organization of the cues that guide the viewer in the construction of the narrative. In this sense, Bordwell (1995 [1985]: 62) also rejects the figure of the "implied author", because any feature of the film which could be attributed to it could, in a simpler way, be assigned to the narration itself.

For his part, Currie agrees with Bordwell in that the figure of the narrator is not required for a filmic narrative to exist, but he does not share his view on the issue of the "implied author":

> he [Bordwell] speaks, for instance, of a narration which "suppresses information". Without recourse to the idea of intention, you can speak of a system that fails to deliver all the information you want, but not of a system that suppresses information. (Currie, 1995b: 26)

That is, if viewers are to follow a set of cues and, by doing so, construct and understand a filmic narrative, there must be an intentional agent who is responsible for those cues, which are not presented randomly. An external narrator is not needed as maker of the narrative, but the "implied author" is.

As for the concept of "implied author", I follow here Rimmon-Kenan's (1991 [1983]: 87) definition: it is "a construct inferred and assembled by the reader from all the components of the text", but not "a personified 'consciousness' or 'second self'". Interestingly, this notion of the "implied author" is, in a way, in tune with Bordwell's approach, even though he denies the existence of this figure in the cinema. He holds that films have real authors (the filmmakers) who create the cues that, in turn, guide the viewer through the process of constructing the story. Why not bring together the multiple authors

involved in the creation of a movie (screenwriter, producer, director, editor, composer, and so on), and all their contributions and decisions, under the construct of the "implied author"? By selectively projecting into a blend (cf. Fauconnier & Turner, 2002) the work of each of those authors and the narrative cues that as a result appear in the film, as well as the general idea of an author (which includes creativity, intentionality, the production of a piece of work, and so on), it is possible to access a human-scale idea of authorship in the form of the "implied author", which actually unifies a wide variety of authorial agents. Furthermore, this kind of blend also facilitates the emergence of a film as a unified piece of discourse[34] (cf. sections 4.2.6 and 4.3.1), in spite of the multiplicity of creators involved in the process of production, who usually are dissimilar in terms of ideology, moral standards, perspectives, interests, etc.

The cognitive-oriented theories owe a great deal to the preceding narratology-based definitions of the external narrator. By rethinking from a different angle what the latter said, the former could come up with new proposals on the issue. That is, even though the approaches to the topic are varied, and sometimes even contradictory, they all have contributed to a fruitful analysis of this narrative figure.

All in all, and knowing that the discussion about the extradiegetic narrator in film is not closed in the academic field, for the purposes of this dissertation I will follow Bordwell's approach, alongside Currie's clarification about the implied author. This cognitive explanation connects with the conception of film as a kind of multimodal discourse, one that is composed by different modalities which interact in the construction of meaning. Each of those modalities present in a film shows up in a series of cues which guide the viewer in the narrative process. Part of that process of narrative construction by the viewer involves (naturally and non-consciously) blending the various modalities into one single narrative piece, a film, unitary in form and meaning. Now then, those multimodal cues do not just "appear" in

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[34] Some film narratives do not result in a coherent and unitary whole for the viewer, who finds them complicated, and maybe incomprehensible. But often in those cases the authors' goal is precisely that: to leave the viewer confused and not knowing how to make sense of the narrative.

the film, but they are the product of an author's intentional work (actually several authors, as I have stated above, all of them blended into the figure of the implied author). It is as if there were many Little Thumbs who would throw white pebbles along a path and, after those agents are gone (or hide and leave no trace), someone would come and be able to follow that path to a specific destination thanks to the stones. The journey (the narrative) is made by the traveler (the viewer) step by step, pebble by pebble, cue by cue.

4.1.2   NARRATORS AND VIEWPOINT

The fact that the figure of an external narrator is not needed to explain the functioning of cinematic discourse does not mean that narrative voices of any kind are excluded from film. Actually, movies frequently employ other kinds of narrators, which Gaudreault (1988: 173-185) calls "delegated" narrators because, he argues, they speak in the name of the "mega-narrator", who lets them take part in some of his narrating functions. However, this terminology does not make sense if we deny the existence of the "mega-narrator". Those filmic narrative voices, then, are not delegates of a superior narrative instance, but just another one of the many means that cinema, as an audiovisual medium, uses to recount stories.

Cuevas (2009), following Genette's (1972) typology of literary narrators, describes four kinds of narrative voices in film: extra-heterodiegetic, extra-homodiegetic, intra-homodiegetic and intra-heterodiegetic.

The extra-heterodiegetic narrator speaks from outside the diegesis[35] and is not a character in the story, like the voice-over narrator in *Amélie* (2001). This type of narrator, however, is not in control of the whole narrative, even when its nature recalls that of literary omniscient narrators (which are originally the extra-heterodiegetic narrators in Genette's classification). That is, in film, as Gaudreault points out (1988: 180-181), this kind of narrative voice

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[35] I use the term "diegesis" here as it is employed by Genette: "l'univers spatio-temporel désigné par le récit" (1972: 280). In other words, the universe in which the story occurs.

does not have power over the images shown while he speaks, or over other sounds reproduced at the same time (e.g. extradiegetic music), and neither do the other three types.

Another type of narrator is the extra-homodiegetic one, who speaks from outside the diegesis but is at the same time a character in the story. He always narrates in voice-over, and so he is not visually portrayed while doing so (extradiegetic level), but he is seen as a character in the story being told (diegetic level), when he does not perform a narrative function. Thus, this narrator can be either a witness of the events he recounts (Red in *The Shawshank Redemption*, 1994) or the protagonist of the story, which he narrates once it has concluded (Joe Gillis in *Sunset Blvd*, 1950).

A third kind is the intra-homodiegetic narrator, who tells from inside the diegesis a story in which he is the protagonist. It is different from the extra-homodiegetic narrator in that he tells the story to another character, and he is visually depicted in the act of telling. Many instances of this type of narrator are found in flashback scenes, because the character's act of narrating in the story present serves as a cue for the narrative to render visually those past events being told. Well-known examples can be found in *Rashomon* (1950), *Singin' in the Rain* (1952) or *Forrest Gump* (1994).

Finally, the intra-heterodiegetic narrator resembles its homodiegetic counterpart in that he is also a character who tells a story within the diegesis, but he differs in the kind of story he tells, for he is not involved in it as a character. That is the case of the grandfather in *The Princess Bride* (1987), who reads the story of the princess to his grandson, a story which is then enacted and constitutes the core of the film.

Even though Cuevas (2009) does not offer an analysis of this fourth category arguing that it is rarely used in film, I consider it is better to keep the quadripartite classification complete, for all the four categories cover most of the cases one may find. The intra-heterodiegetic narrator accounts for some film narrator examples,

however few they may be, and that makes the category useful and necessary for analytical purposes.

As mentioned above, cinema is essentially a mimetic medium, but one which also employs verbal tellers as instruments of narrative mediation in the stories it composes (Kuhn, 2009). If at the beginning of this chapter the opposition between *telling* and *showing* was discussed, now we must turn to another classical dichotomy: the one between "who speaks" and "who sees" (or rather "who perceives"), that is, between narration and focalization (Genette, 1983: 43). Certainly, the narrative voices already described stand out as instances of the *telling* (but, again, filmic narration cannot be reduced to those voices). At the same time, focalization is not limited to the visual or optical resources found in films. In other words, "the camera perspective (in a technical sense) is not understood as the only factor for determining focalization and/or narrative perspective" (Kuhn & Schmidt, 2014).

The term "focalization" as proposed by Genette intended to avoid others such as "point of view" or "vision" which can be identified with a purely optical perspective. And, although this term still suggests visual connotations (Rimmon-Kenan, 1991 [1983]: 71-72), it encompasses a wider definition of perspective which refers to "a restriction of 'field', (…) a situated focus, a sort of information-conveying pipe that allows passage only of information that is authorized by the situation" (Genette, 1988 [1983]: 74)[36]. Focalization has been a much discussed concept in the narratological field, and still is. However, it is not within the purposes of this dissertation to offer a reviewed account of the varied perspectives on the concept. I will just expose an approach which is built upon the narratological tradition's enquiry on the subject, but which adopts a cognitive orientation; more specifically, it results from applying Conceptual Integration Theory to narrative texts.

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[36] In Genette's (1983: 49) original words, focalization is "une restriction de 'champ', (…) un foyer situé, c'est-à-dire une sorte de goulot d'information, qui n'en laisse passer que ce qu'autorise sa situation".

Barbara Dancygier, one of the prominent academic figures in the field, has carried out a thorough analysis of the processes of story construction in literary texts (2012b), a study which relies strongly on the concept of narrative space. This concept derives from that of "mental spaces" as defined by Blending Theory: conceptual packets which are activated and constructed on the fly in processes of meaning construction. Narrative spaces share much of mental spaces' characteristics, and each one is defined by its own topology[37] (space, time, narrators, characters, language spoken, etc.) (Dancygier, 2012b: 36). The links established in a narrative between these spaces, as well as the multiple levels of blends in which they participate, contribute to the process of story construction. This idea of narrative space is essential in Dancygier's understanding of the concept of "viewpoint"[38], which she defines as "a particular use of the structure of the [narrative] space" (2012b: 61). That is, viewpoint is built upon a distinct element of the narrative space's structure, upon some element which is part of the space's topology. That specific aspect is selected and functions as "a filter through which the events are narrated", but it is not necessarily related to sight (2012b: 61), nor to a particular fictional mind or consciousness (2012b: 88). Thus, viewpoint is in fact the way in which the content of a given narrative space is presented, and so viewpoint may be spatial, temporal, epistemic, ideological, etc. (2012b: 61-63).

The notion of narrative space is also fundamental in Dancygier's conception of the narrator, which she defines as "a feature of the narrative space configuration in any given case" (2012b: 60). In light of this, it makes sense to consider the narrative voices discussed above as narrative devices which are not subordinated to an external cinematic narrator. Rather, they are resources of multimodal narrative

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[37] The topology of a mental space is defined by Fauconnier & Turner (2002: 104) as "the elements and relations activated simultaneously as a single integrated unit".

[38] Dancygier employs the term "viewpoint" because it is one of the most widely used to refer to issues of perspective in a broad sense (i.e. beyond mere visual perception). Although most of the time "viewpoint" and "focalization" could be interchangeable terms, I will use "viewpoint" to refer to Dancygier's particular concept, and leave "focalization" for other specific definitions of the term.

configuration which operate at the level of particular narrative spaces. Thus, narrative voices and viewpoint are closely connected. Dancygier (2012b: 62-64) speaks of three types of spaces whose configuration defines macro-level viewpoint (as opposed to micro-level or sentence-level shifts of viewpoint) in literary texts: story-viewpoint (SV) space, main narrative (MN) space, and Ego-viewpoint space. The SV space, which does not usually develop a topology (time, setting, events, etc.), is the one in which an independent narrator is located and, more importantly, "it houses a vantage point with the rest of the narrative in its scope" (2012b: 64). But in the case of film, and from a theoretical position which denies the existence of a cinematic narrator, what is the role of the SV-space? As Dancygier argues, narrative viewpoint may be independent from the subjectivity of a teller, and it is essentially a trait of a specific narrative space (2012b: 86). Elsewhere, as a result of analyzing a particular film's narrative, she also notes that in order for the reader or viewer to come up with a coherent emergent story, a unifying narrative viewpoint is needed (Dancygier, 2012a: 51), which is located in the SV-space. Thus, the story viewpoint is a unified perspective over the whole narrative which is built up in the narrative process. That is, it is revealed in the different multimodal cues that construct the film narrative: types of frames, camera movements, transitions, extradiegetic music, inserted texts, etc.[39] And narrative voices are one particular kind of cue which contributes to that unified general viewpoint—the extradiegetic narrator in *Amélie* (2001), for instance, may seem like an all-controlling narrator, but it is just another narrative device which has a part in the unified general viewpoint in the SV-level. In the case of character narrators, their specific viewpoint is blended with that of the SV-space for as long as they narrate, and so, because of viewpoint compression, the perspective of that character becomes the story viewpoint for a while (Dancygier, 2012b: 66-67). However, since film is not a monomodal medium (unlike literature, for example), but a

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[39] Strictly speaking, these are cues belonging to the extradiegetic narrative level, which is composed of the extradiegetic (audio)visual and verbal narrative instances. Character narrators, for its part, belong to the intradiegetic narrative level (Kuhn, 2009). However, it is worth noting that extra-homodiegetic narrators also qualify as characters, although they narrate from outside the diegesis proper. And, most importantly, all narrative voices (whether extra, intra, homo or heterodiegetic) constitute sources of viewpoint in a film.

type of discourse composed of visual, auditory and verbal modalities, there are usually a variety of perspectives brought to the table by those different expressive levels which are blended in a unifying narrative viewpoint. That is, whenever a character narrates there are usually other viewpoints involved apart from the one he or she contributes, and which may come from the abovementioned camera angles and movements, transitions, music, and many other elements in the narrative which that character cannot control. Hence, having different viewpoints blended in a given film fragment is not an exceptional case, but rather a characteristic feature of cinematic narratives (cf. chapter 3, section 3.3.3).

The MN space corresponds to the story itself, the diegetic level, composed of many other narrative spaces. If any of the characters from the MN space performs narrating functions —as in *Forrest Gump* (1994), for instance—, Ego-viewpoint spaces come into play as well, and these characters' viewpoints are blended with the SV-point, as it has been pointed out above.

All in all, narrative voices in film are not just limited to performing a role of tellers, but they also function as sources of viewpoint. However, their perspective is just one more among the variety of viewpoints which are combined in the different narrative spaces and which contribute to the construction of a given story. In this respect, it is also interesting to consider the narrative possibilities arising in cinema as a result of the simultaneity of visual and acoustic information, a fundamental feature of the medium that Schlickers calls "double perspectivation" (2009: 245). One of many possible manifestations of it is the interplay between the telling of a voice-over narrator and an audiovisual narration of the facts told. The relation between them can appear either in forms of interaction or tension (Kuhn & Schmidt, 2014). An example of tension is found in the flashback scene in *Singin' in the Rain* (1952) (00:04:15-00:11:05), where Don Lockwood's verbal narration of the beginning of his career does not match the visual rendering of the story, thus provoking a comical effect. Similar examples are seen throughout *The Marrying Kind* (1952), although their effect is simultaneously humorous and sad due to the tragicomic tone of the film. Thus, viewpoints from the verbal and the

(audio)visual source may contradict each other, and the outcome of that interplay varies depending on other narrative elements.

4.2 POINT OF VIEW IN FILM

The issue of viewpoint in cinematic discourse has been widely studied from different approaches by a variety of authors. Naturally, the analysis of point of view in film benefited in the first place from the concepts and categories that narratology had already proposed, mostly from Genette's concept of "focalization" and then also from other authors whose proposals revise Genette's model, like Chatman (1990: 139-160), Bal (1985) or Rimmon-Kenan (1991 [1983]), to name a few (cf. also Stam et al., 1996; Cuevas, 2001; Pérez-Bowie, 2008).

However, film theoreticians soon realized that, due to cinema's multimodal nature, it is not possible to automatically apply the literary concept of focalization to the analysis of film without reformulating it in some way. There are mainly two channels of information in film: the (audio)visual and the verbal. Thus, there is actual perception on the part of the spectator, both visual and auditory, so the question of "who perceives" cannot be equated to focalization in film. It is on the basis of this consideration that François Jost (Gaudreault & Jost, 1990)[40] proposes to differentiate between knowledge and perception when speaking of cinematic focalization. He uses the term "focalization" to refer strictly to the epistemic perspective in a given film, and he distinguishes two dimensions, "ocularization" and "auricularization", within the perceptive field. In what follows I will explain each of these concepts and their subcategories. Also, I will set forth Edward Branigan's main ideas about subjectivity in film, which Cuevas (2001: 129-131) finds to be closely connected to Jost's concept of perceptual focalization.

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[40] Although Jost exposes his ideas in a book published alongside André Gaudreault (*Le récit cinématographique*), he is individually responsible for the section dedicated to point of view. That is why I attribute only to Jost all the contents regarding focalization. Translations of Jost's quotes are mine.

4.2.1   FOCALIZATION AS KNOWLEDGE

In line with Genette, Jost defines focalization as "[the] cognitive focus adopted by the narration" (Gaudreault & Jost, 1990: 137). This epistemic perspective is not deduced from pure perception (visual or auditory), since what is seen or heard is not automatically equated to what is known. As Jost explains, ocularization in particular depends on other elements to acquire epistemic value, namely the actions depicted in the scene, the scenery elements, and the information added by a voice-over (in case there is one), since all these elements provide the viewer with higher knowledge than that of the characters (Gaudreault & Jost, 1990: 137-138). However, as Cuevas aptly points out, this distinction between what is seen and what is known is also a limited one, because ultimately focalization understood as epistemic focus does also integrate perceptive phenomena. Perception precedes knowledge and is a necessary step to reach it, although it should not be identified with it (Cuevas, 2001: 131; cf. also Ibarretxe-Antuñano, 2008).

Jost describes three types of focalization, also following Genette's model but making some adjustments to it: he speaks of internal, external, and spectatorial focalization (this last category substitutes that of "zero focalization"). There is internal focalization when "the narrative is limited to what a character is able to know". This means either that the character is present in every scene of the film or that he explains at some point where he got the information of the events he did not witness. However, this epistemic alignment with a character does not necessarily imply sharing his optical perspective (internal ocularization). Moreover, as Jost points out, a scene which strictly shows a character's visual perception may also be a case of external focalization, since the viewer is ignorant of that character's physical appearance, and thus knows less than the character (this is the effect attained at the beginning of *Dark Passage* (1947), where, by observing everything through the protagonist's eyes, the viewer ignores for a while his being a fugitive convict) (Gaudreault & Jost, 1990: 138-139). Finally, this type of focalization, as in Genette, may be fixed (restricted to one character's perspective), variable (alternating between two or more characters), and multiple (a single fact is known through different characters).

External focalization, on the other hand, is defined by Jost as a restriction of the viewer's knowledge in relation to that of the character (Gaudreault & Jost, 1990: 139-140). This concept varies with respect to Genette's definition, which underlies the external approach to the events narrated, without having access to the characters' interiority. In film it is almost impossible not to have information about a character's internal dispositions, for an actor's performing resources —voice and corporal expression, mainly— already reveal something about the inner self (Cuevas, 2001: 133). Therefore, Genette's concept is not strictly applicable to the cinematic medium, since "the externality of the camera does not equate with a pure negation of the character's interiority" (Gaudreault & Jost, 1990: 139). External focalization in film, in Jost's terms, consists on limiting the amount of information the viewer has, so he knows less than a given character. This restricted knowledge may be related to a particular story event, or to external or internal issues regarding the character, and it has narrative effects. Jost exemplifies his theoretical proposal with the opening sequence from *Strangers on a Train* (1951), where we only see two pairs of legs walking and getting on a train. We may deduce some of the characters' features just from this image, but certainly there is more concealed information than given (Gaudreault & Jost, 1990: 140).

Finally, Jost speaks of spectatorial focalization, using this term as a substitute for Genette's zero focalization. Cuevas (2001: 134) argues that the introduction of this new term is not fully justified, for the only novelty added by spectatorial focalization is that it highlights one of the effects of zero focalization: the spectator knows more than the characters due to the narrator's omniscience. Applied to film, this type of focalization consists on giving the viewer some epistemic advantage over the characters by using different cinematic means: camera positions, parallel editing, splitting the screen to show simultaneous actions, etc. These narrative resources put the viewer in a privileged position cognitively speaking[41] (Gaudreault & Jost, 1990: 141-142).

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[41] In contrast, Jost uses the term "spectatorial ocularization" to refer to those cases in which the viewer's advantage is only perceptive, thanks to the position of the camera (Gaudreault & Jost, 1990: 141). But, as Cuevas (2001: 134) points

The three types of focalization defined by Jost (internal, external, and spectatorial) are combined in the process of a given film's narration. Very few times a single perspective (either epistemic or perceptive) is sustained throughout a single narrative. These variations serve to situate the viewer in different positions of knowledge and perception, and thus fulfill different functions:

> [g]lobally, internal focalization allows for progressively elucidating the events (we discover things at the same time as the character) and, for that reason, it is the privileged form of the *inquiry*. External focalization is the figure of the *enigma*: it can therefore set the film in motion or pose a question that the narration will strive to solve. As for spectatorial focalization, (…) it is the driving force of *suspense* or *comedy*. (Gaudreault & Jost, 1990: 143)

However, observing the results of applying these three categories to the analysis of filmic narratives, Cuevas (2001: 135) notes that internal focalization is the most common one, while external and spectatorial focalization are only used sporadically.

4.2.2   OCULARIZATION

As one of the two dimensions of perspective in terms of perception, "ocularization" is understood as "the relation between what the camera *shows* and what the character is supposed to *see*" (Gaudreault & Jost, 1990: 130). There are two options in this relation: either the visualized shot is identified with the look of a diegetic instance (internal ocularization), or the shot is not attributed to any character's gaze (zero ocularization).

Moreover, internal ocularization may be primary or secondary. In primary internal ocularization the camera is aligned, in a restricted sense, with a particular character's look. This effect can be attained in a variety of ways: using a distorted image which does not follow cinematic conventions of "normal" sight, and which reflects, for instance, how the character sees while in an abnormal mental or

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out, he fails to explain the difference between these cases and those of zero ocularization in which the narrative discourse's autonomy results as well in a perceptive advantage of the viewer over the characters.

physical state (in *Vertigo*, 1958, for example, Scottie's fear of heights is visually conveyed through the famous dolly-zoom effect in the bell tower scene). Another option is to use a *caché* to simulate that the character is looking through a keyhole, a camera lens, binoculars, etc. (as in *Rear Window*, 1954), or to employ shots which reveal part of the character's body and which refer to his eyes by proximity (as in the flashback in *Spellbound*, 1945). Finally, subjective camera movements imitating how the character moves (e.g. unstable shots) may also be used to construct this type of ocularization (Gaudreault & Jost, 1990: 131-132).

By contrast, in secondary internal ocularization the character's perspective is reproduced by continuity editing (cf. chapter 3, section 3.1.2), as in the shot/reverse shot technique. Thus, a shot of a character looking in a certain direction is followed by a shot of an object or another character, and we infer that it is being observed by the character in the first shot (Gaudreault & Jost, 1990: 133).

As for zero ocularization, as it has been indicated above, it is found in the so called "nobody's shots" which do not match any character's look.

4.2.3   AURICULARIZATION

The second dimension of perspective in reference to perception concerns the auditory level, and, by parallelism with ocularization, it may be defined as "the relation between what the microphone records and what the character listens to" (Cuevas, 2001: 127). As it is the case with ocularization, auricularization is divided by Jost into two main categories: internal (primary and secondary) and zero. In instances of zero auricularization, sounds (voices, music, noises…) are perceived from an external position, that is, the viewer does not listen "through" a character. Sounds are thus regulated by the usual formal conventions (e.g. music volume is lowered to make dialogue intelligible). But these sounds may be both extradiegetic (e.g. the music soundtrack) and intradiegetic (e.g. ambient sound in a scene) (Gaudreault & Jost, 1990: 136).

Internal auricularization, on the other hand, similarly to internal ocularization, encompasses those cases in which a particular sound is perceived by the viewer through a character. However, it should be explained how the spectator knows who is acting as an auditory filter. In the case of primary internal auricularization, the distortion of the acoustic signal tells who the listening character is. That is, the sound is perceived just like the character perceives it (if, for instance, the character is underwater, this location will affect the way he receives sounds). In instances of secondary internal auricularization, on the other hand, it is the images and the editing that let the viewer know who is listening, like when, for instance, a character covers his ears and, with her, the viewer stops listening; or when a character moves away from a third-party conversation and the viewer stops hearing the conversation too (Gaudreault & Jost, 1990: 135-136).

4.2.4   BRANIGAN'S MODEL OF SUBJECTIVITY

In his book *Point of View in the Cinema*, Edward Branigan (1984) analyzes the different ways in which film constructs subjective points of view. This variety of mechanisms he defines is based on a particular notion of subjectivity, which he conceives as "a specific instance or level of narration where the telling is *attributed* to a character in the narrative and received by us *as if* we were in the situation of a character" (1984: 73). Thus, "for convenience", subjectivity is limited to intradiegetic instances of point of view, and it leaves aside other devices such as voice-over narrators.

Branigan then presents six major types of subjectivity, which result from the various combinations of six elements: origin, vision, object, time, frame, and mind (1984: 76). The first three are invariable in all types of subjectivity (at least in the classical film, which is the focus of Branigan's study): a character is always the origin of perception (in a direct or indirect way); vision is also that of a character, and so the space perceived is either seen or generated by a character (that vision may also be metaphorical, as in dreams or memories); and finally, the object, or what the character sees, may be anything and it does not affect the classification of subjectivity: what matters is not *what*, but *how* a character sees (1984: 76-77).

It is the other three parameters (time, frame, and mind) which determine the six main types of subjectivity that Branigan defines in detail. Time refers to the temporal quality of the character's vision, which may be present, past, future, or undefined (1984: 77). Frame, on the other hand, is defined in relation to the character as the origin of the vision. Thus, the framing is "from the point" when there is a spatial logic linking frame and character. But if that relation follows a different logic (non spatial), the framing is called "from the point by metaphor". At the opposite end lies objective or "not from the point" narration, where there is no logic linking frame and character (1984: 78). Finally, Branigan speaks of the character's mental condition referring to the representation of internal states such as memory, dreams, fear, etc. In case that the filmic text does not make such a state explicit, we may speak of "no special condition" or "normal awareness" on the part of the character (1984: 78).

It is from the combination of these three variables that six major types of subjectivity emerge: reflection, projection, perception, subjective flashback, subjective mental process, and point-of-view (POV) shot. Both reflection and projection are located in the present time, and the frame that defines them is "from the point by metaphor". That is, the frame is not established exactly from the spatial point where the character is, but, instead, the space represented is metaphorically associated to the character: "we 'understand' (…) that a space is subjective though we do not, literally, see its subjectiveness (from the place of the character)" (Branigan, 1984: 124). The difference between reflection and projection lies in the character's mental condition. Reflection shows "no special condition": it is the character's body, and not a mental state, that is projected into space through a mirror or a surface with reflecting properties. Crucially, in order to acquire subjective status, the reflection must show the character looking at himself, and thus, "[m]etaphorically, we are able to locate ourselves with the character as the origin of the mirrored image". The character is both the subject and object of perception (Branigan, 1984: 127-129). On the other hand, projection shows a character's mental condition, and it does so by arranging filmic elements which are external to the character (composition, *mise-en-scène*, camera movements, lighting, sound, etc.) in

order to metaphorically represent the character's inner state (Branigan, 1984: 132-133).

The next three subjectivity types (perception, subjective flashback, and subjective mental process) share two features: they all make explicit a character's mental condition, and they also render it from the spatial point where the character is located. However, they differ in their temporal dimension: the time of perception is the present, that of subjective flashbacks is the past, and subjective mental processes are located in an undefined moment in time. Perception structures are similar to POV shots, but they differ in the level of mental condition since they show the conditions of the character's perception. Thus, a commonly used device is the out-of-focus POV shot, which may represent that a character is drunk, dizzy, drugged, etc. (Branigan, 1984: 80). Subjective flashbacks, for their part, revolve around a character's memory (which is the mental condition made explicit) and they are built "from the point" of the character's location (Branigan, 1984: 78; 98)[42]. As for subjective mental processes (e.g. dreams), its distinctive feature is that of being located in an undefined moment in time, which is formally signaled in a variety of ways: soundtrack, superimpositions, light, color, etc. (Branigan, 1984: 90).

Finally, Branigan defines one last subjectivity type: the point-of-view (POV) shot. Due to the importance of this cinematic device, which has received attention from many different authors, it will be explained in a separate section.

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[42] However, Branigan's definition of subjective flashbacks is not very thorough compared to the account he gives of other types of subjectivity. Some of his statements are not clear enough, and at times they even seem contradictory: for instance, subjective flashbacks are said to be framed "from the point", that is, from the character's point in space (which is sometimes metaphorical) (1984: 98), but it is also said that in such flashbacks "frame is what is placed before us by the character's memory" (1984: 75). What many subjective flashback scenes actually show is that, in the framing, the character's memory prevails over the character's position in space.

4.2.5   THE POINT-OF-VIEW SHOT IN FILM

Branigan defines POV shots according to the variables of time, frame, and mind. He argues that POV shots are situated in the present, are framed "from the point", and do not reveal a particular mental condition of the character. Also, they are built upon the eyeline match technique (cf. chapter 3, section 3.1.2). These kinds of shots are similar to the perception shots described above in their time and frame features, but POV shots differ in that they do not show a character's particular inner state (Branigan, 1984: 98). Furthermore, in POV shots "the camera assumes the position of a subject in order to show us what the subject sees" (Branigan, 1984: 103), but that position may either be exactly that of the character or one very close to that point. Also, the camera is not necessarily identified with the character's eyes, and so, relating Branigan's classification to Jost's types or perceptive focalization, we may say (in broad terms) that Branigan's POV shot equates to Jost's secondary internal ocularization, and Branigan's perception is the equivalent of Jost's primary internal ocularization (and auricularization). However, since the authors do not share the same classification criteria, the equation is not that simple: there are, for instance, cases of primary internal ocularization which reveal a character's mental condition and others which show no special condition at all.

Following Branigan, a conventional POV shot is made up of two basic shots: shot A (Point/Glance) and shot B (Point/Object). Shot A is determined by a point in space (*point*) and a subject's glance from that point referring to an object (usually) off-camera (*glance*). In shot B the camera is located at the same point in space established by shot A (*from point*) and the object towards which the glance was directed is revealed (*object*). Also, between shots A and B there is a *transition* that Branigan (1984: 103) defines as temporal continuity or simultaneity, and a sixth element, *character*, gives unity to shots A and B by its presence and normal awareness. Interestingly, with regard to *transition* Branigan (1984: 105) points out that, if there is no temporal continuity or simultaneity, the POV shot becomes deviant and, as a result, it can take the form of a subjective flashback (among other things). That is the case with the flashback examples from *Big Fish* (2003), *The Help* (2011), and other films (cf. chapter 3), in which the

object of the character's attention (shot B) is in fact an object from the past, and so a POV structure is the basis for the retrospection scene.

Apart from breaking down the conventional POV shot into the elements explained above, Branigan also names a number of variants of the POV structure. The two major variants are the "prospective" POV (shot A + shot B) and the "retrospective" POV (shot B + shot A) (Branigan, 1984: 111); an example of this last type is found in the flashback at the beginning of *Ray* (2004). But there are also other simple variants of these two major structures, and so the POV shot may be "closed" (ABA structure, where the point/glance shot is repeated), "delayed" (shots A and B are separated through editing for narrative reasons), "open" (when shot B, announced by the glance in shot A, is omitted), "continuing" (the character looks either at various objects or several times at the same object), "cheated" (shot B is shown at a shorter distance than the point established by shot A allows), "multiple" (different characters look at the same object), "embedded" (a POV shot involving one character is inserted into a larger POV structure of another character), and, finally, "reciprocal" (shot B is not only an object, but also a looking subject staring at the person in shot A, as in conversation scenes) (Branigan, 1984: 112-117).

Lastly, I will shortly consider Noël Carroll's approach to cinematic POV. Carroll (1996b) takes Branigan's definition of POV as a starting point, and he then proposes two hypotheses: the first one states that every POV shot is a representation of our natural way of perceiving. But, even though our act of perception is not essentially communicative (it does not always have that intention), POV shots always are. That is, the purpose of the point/glance-point/object structure is to communicate some kind of information to push the narrative forward (Carroll, 1996b: 129) (cf. chapter 3, sections 3.2.2 and 3.2.4).

With his second hypothesis, Carroll tries to show how POV shots are employed to render the characters' emotional states. He affirms that in POV structures both the looking subject and the observed

object offer information relative to the character's emotional situation. The first one, the point/glance shot, opens up a range of possible emotions the character may be experiencing and, also, prepares the viewer for the reception and interpretation of the point/object shot. It creates a horizon of expectations (although it may also be subverted sometimes, as when there is a comic intention, for instance). The second shot (point/object) establishes the cause of the emotion represented in the point/glance shot, and thus specifies it within the range of emotions offered. Carroll (1996b: 129-133) concludes that, regarding the expression of emotions, the importance of the point/glance shot is not bigger than that of the point/object shot: both shots are equally necessary and they complement each other in giving information about the character's inner state[43] (cf. also Coëgnarts & Kravanja, 2016).

4.2.6   THE COGNITIVE DIMENSION OF VIEWPOINT

Summing up, the purpose of this section has been to explore the types of focalization (epistemic and perceptive) and modes of subjectivity that are employed in filmic narratives. However, the variety of terms, concepts and categories exposed may seem exceedingly diverse and lacking a unifying principle. The way to bring all of them together into a unitary system may be to think of narratives and narrative viewpoint in terms of macro and micro levels, following Dancygier (2012b). As stated above, the micro level in literary texts is that of sentence-level shifts of viewpoint, and the macro level is defined by three broad types of narrative spaces (story-viewpoint space, main narrative space and Ego-viewpoint space). However, transferring this system of levels to film and delimiting such levels (as well as the specific micro-level filmic elements within each of them) is not an easy task, at least not if one wants to reach a systematic solution. In any case, what is certainly crucial, as Dancygier

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[43] Carroll's second hypothesis is based on and at the same time endorsed by the so called "Kuleshov effect", which was fruit of an experiment that combined shots of the same character looking (point/glance) with images of different objects being observed (point/object): a bowl of soup, a dead woman, a child playing, etc. The result was that the viewers interpreted the expression of the looking character differently depending on the object being observed (Sitney, 1990: 18-19).

notes (2008: 65), is the interaction between levels and "the emergence of the higher level based on narration at the lower level". Most importantly, a variety of viewpoints come into play, profiled by different filmic elements from the visual, auditory and verbal modalities, and the coherence and consistency of this multiplicity of perspectives is due to the existence of an implicit stance in the higher level (or story-viewpoint level) responsible for the orchestration of the whole narrative in a film (cf. chapter 3, section 3.3.3). Thus, in order to carry out a coherent and valid analysis of viewpoint in film flashbacks, I will pay attention to the concrete formal aspects of the cinematic text, and thereupon I will further build the complete analysis in terms of viewpoint compression. It is in the study of particular filmic narrative resources (whether visual, auditory or verbal) where we can speak of instances of focalization (as knowledge), ocularization and auricularization, in Jost's terms, and also where we can discover instances of subjectivity as described by Branigan. All those specific realizations of viewpoint contribute to build a higher-level unifying narrative viewpoint, an implicit stance, which is an essential component in the emergence of the story as one whole unit.

With regard to terminology, I will speak of "viewpoint" in Dancygier's broad sense, exposed above: it is the way in which the content of a narrative space is presented by selecting certain elements of that narrative space to function as filters of some kind. Thus, it encompasses both perceptive and non-perceptive instances of viewpoint.

Also, I will talk about "epistemic viewpoint" to refer to focalization in Jost's sense of cognitive focus, and it will be distinguished from perceptual instances of perspective, i.e. ocularization and auricularization. As for "point of view", I will limit the use of the term to specific references to POV shots as defined by Branigan (that is, for the different realizations of the basic structure point/glance shot–point/object shot).

4.3 BLENDING OF VIEWPOINTS IN FLASHBACKS

4.3.1   A MULTIPLICITY OF PERSPECTIVES

As stated earlier in the chapter, the multimodal quality of cinema, which combines images, sound and verbal language, makes multiple viewpoints simultaneously available in filmic narratives. This, rather than being exceptionally the case, is actually the norm in any given movie scene. Recent research on viewpoint across different instances of multimodal communication (e.g. Dancygier & Vandelanotte, 2017; Vandelanotte & Dancygier, 2017) has shown that a variety of perspectives are easily conveyed through the combination of modalities characteristic of, for instance, co-speech gesture, internet memes, and advertising. The same holds true for film, in which the interplay of visual and auditory levels, together with verbal language, gives rise to a multiplicity of viewpoints which are handled with different narrative purposes (see Tobin, 2017, for a particular example of viewpoint manipulation in film).

At the basis of these manifold perspectives that shape cinematic narratives lies the blended joint attention triangle composed of the camera, the viewer, and the diegetic elements they are attending to (i.e. the fictional world of the film with its characters, their actions, etc.) (cf. chapter 3, especially sections 3.2.2 and 3.2.3). The camera and the viewer's optical viewpoints are always fused together, and they jointly attend to the events being narrated. A character, either jointly or in parallel, may be attending as well to the same elements in the diegesis. Furthermore, sometimes the camera and the viewer's optical perspective is aligned with that of the character by means of a point-of-view shot. However, there are other instances of viewpoint apart from the specifically perceptual one. As exposed above, any element from the topology of a given narrative space may be a source of viewpoint, and thus this allows for a great number of perspectives to be involved in a particular scene (and certainly in a movie): for example, regardless of whether we are aligned with a character's optical perspective or not, a variety of character viewpoints may be available (e.g. epistemic stance, ideological perspective, etc.) and work as a filter through which the narrated events are accessed. The diverse

modalities that compose film narratives contribute to convey multiple perspectives too, as when the viewpoint of a voice-over narrator orchestrates the visual enactment of events, told from a different (complementary or clashing) viewpoint.

As can be seen, cinematic storytelling brings into play a myriad of perspectives, but the complexity which this certainly involves is not an obstacle for the viewer because he is able to grasp all of them at the level of the story-blend, where all perspectives fit together under an implicit stance (i.e. a unifying narrative viewpoint) that has the whole narrative under its scope. More specifically, and as will be discussed below, flashbacks deploy and rely on this game of viewpoints as well, but their intricacy on this level makes them both comprehensible and compelling. In what follows, the functioning of viewpoint will be analyzed in a variety of flashback scenes. Particular attention will be paid to double viewpoint in "memory flashbacks" (that is, retrospective scenes in which a character recalls an event of his past), and to "replay flashbacks" (i.e. those which revisit an episode already narrated) (cf. Bordwell, 1995 [1985], 2013c).

4.3.2   A CHARACTER'S DOUBLE PERSPECTIVE

Characteristically, flashbacks narrate past events in the story. But they can only be understood as *past* events if they are presented in relation to the present time in the narrative; the past is the past only regarding the present. However obvious this fact may be, it is crucial in terms of viewpoint construction in flashback scenes, and particularly in those memory flashbacks where a character recalls an event from his life.

In her study of *past + now* linguistic constructions in narrative contexts (such as "She now saw that…"), Nikiforidou (2010, 2012) shows that in this kind of structures there is a shift of viewpoint "from the narrator to a vantage point close or inside the narrated event(s)" (2010: 266). The verbal form in the past tense, rather than a particular point in time, signals distance, non-immediacy with respect to the narrator. For its part, *now* means "anchored to a present", but it cannot be the speaker's present due to the presence of the past tense: it is, instead, the present of the narrated events (2012: 272).

Furthermore, if the events are displayed as experienced by a character, then it is the character's present. Thus, the *past + now* structure presents "a non-immediate, not directly accessible event as if it were directly accessible" (2010: 274).

Subsequently, Nikiforidou's analysis was extended by Steen and Turner (2013) to audiovisual pieces of discourse which also feature the linguistic construction *past + now* (mostly news reports and documentaries). The authors show with two examples that the construction's effect of "zooming in on the past events" (Nikiforidou, 2012: 183) is actually rendered visually by zooming-in on the character while he experiences the events. Naturally, our eyes do not have the capacity of performing optical zooms, but our visual imagination does, and so the zoom-in device turns an operation of our visual imagination into actual perception by means of the camera lens (Steen & Turner, 2013: 269-270)[44].

Film flashbacks introduced by a narrative voice function in a similar way to *past + now* structures, even though proximal deictics (either *now* or others such as *today* or *this morning*) are not usually found in those narrators' speeches. The reason for this may be that the flashback itself makes the narrated events of the past directly accessible through image and sound, and thus the events, although understood as belonging to the past, are actually "present" in front of the viewer. However, I will now show that these film sequences share the fundamental trait of *past + now* constructions, which is the availability of the narrator's perspective alongside the character's experience of the past. As far as I know, Steen and Turner's multimodal analysis has not been yet applied to the analysis of film flashbacks, and thus what I propose is a novel approach to the analysis of cinematic retrospections. Let us consider an example to illustrate this issue of double perspective. In *Forrest Gump* (1994), the

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[44] As pointed out in chapter 3 (particularly in section 3.3.1.1), film actually employs two different techniques to achieve the effect of getting visually closer to past events and to the character recalling them: the zoom and the tracking shot. Although in my analyses I specify which one of the two is being used in each example, I treat them equally in functional terms, since they are both used for bringing us closer to the characters and their experiences.

main character tells of his life to every person that sits next to him on the bench where they wait for the bus. This narration triggers several flashbacks that encompass the whole of Forrest's life up to the present moment. The first one of those flashbacks is introduced by Forrest speaking about his first pair of shoes (00:04:00-00:04:55); thus, he is both the narrator in the present and the character that experiences the events of the past. As Figure 17 shows, while Forrest speaks in the present the camera progressively tracks in on his face (shots (a1) and (a2)). He says: "I bet if I think about it real hard I could remember my first pair of shoes. Momma said they'd take me anywhere", and the camera shows his effort to recall them (a2). Then there is a cut to shot (b1), where, in a clear graphic match, Forrest as a child has the same expression as in (a2). The camera then progressively tracks out until Forrest opens his eyes to look at the new shoes (b2).

a1)   a2)

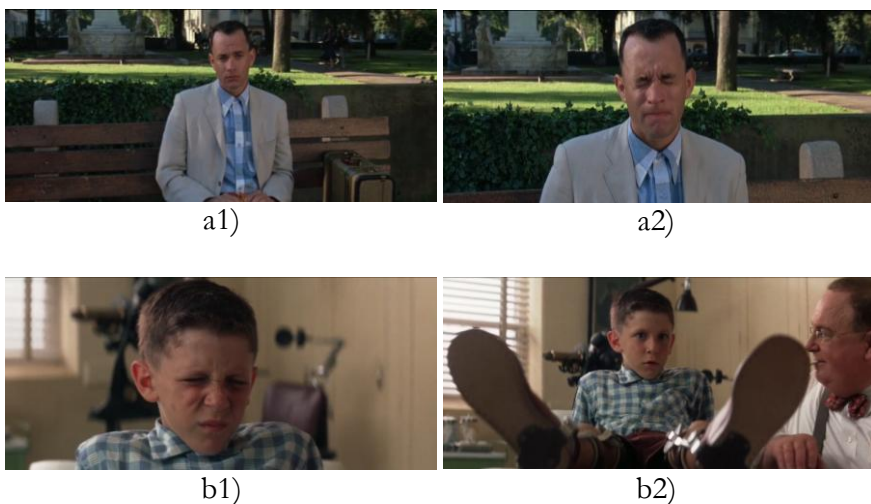b1)   b2)

Figure 17. Childhood flashback in *Forrest Gump* (1994)

As in every flashback, there are two main narrative mental spaces: that of the present (where, in this case, the narrator is located) and that of the past events with the character that experiences them. Thus, just as it occurs with *past + now* constructions, "the narrator is

located in a different space from the character and the narrated events, viewing them from a distance" (Nikiforidou, 2012: 191). As mentioned above regarding narrative spaces, narrators, and perspectives, sometimes the viewpoint of a character narrator is blended with that of the story-viewpoint space (the unifying narrative viewpoint, or "the viewpoint of the orchestration of the entire narrative", in Steen and Turner's terms, 2013: 271). Thus, the character narrator's viewpoint, by means of viewpoint compression, becomes the story viewpoint for as long as he narrates. This is the case with Forrest talking about his childhood while he recalls it. However, there is more to it once the flashback is introduced, for the perspective from inside the narrated events is blended with the narrator's viewpoint, as I explain in what follows.

The narrative space of the past is the one which houses the vantage point of the character that experiences the narrated events. As Steen and Turner (2013: 269) put it, "[t]he mental space of the narrator's condition is still the mental space from which the narrated space is accessed and built up, but the experiential perspective comes from inside the narrated events". In Forrest's case, the story of the first pair of shoes depicted in the flashback is accessed by the viewer from the perspective of the adult Forrest, but the distance from the present to those events is reduced because young Forrest's viewpoint is made available too.

This apparent conflict between both narrative spaces (they do not share the same narrative time, or the same viewpoint) is solved through a process of blending. The relevant elements from both input spaces are projected to the blend, where there is a "compression of the time (and, by extension, the space) distance separating the [narrator's] viewpoint from the focal space [the character's past space] (…). The narrative continues then from this new blended space, which becomes the [Story] Viewpoint Space, at least for a while" (Nikiforidou, 2012: 192). Thus, besides the compression of time there is also viewpoint compression in the blend: the narrator's viewpoint in the present and the character's experiential perspective in the past are compressed into a single blended space that makes them both accessible at the same time. It is due to these processes of

compression (which take place at the higher level of story-viewpoint, where a unifying narrative perspective emerges; cf. section 4.2.6) that Forrest's flashback is not seen either just from adult Forrest's viewpoint or only from the child's perspective, but it is fully understood because both viewpoints are blended in a single mental space and become available at the same time. The viewer looks at the past with the adult Forrest, from the distance of time and life experience, but also goes through the adventure of the first pair of shoes with Forrest's younger self.

Furthermore, these mechanisms of compression produce a smooth continuity between present and past that, in this particular flashback, results in showing Forrest's act of remembering as an actual act of perception. His effort to recall in the present has a visual continuity in the past, and the activity ends with Forrest opening his eyes to actually see what he was trying to remember. This impression of unity (two different activities in two different moments in time are presented as a single one) is only possible through the aforementioned processes of compression and blending.

Going back now to the zooming-in effect analyzed by Steen and Turner, it is necessary to remark that the TV examples studied by them do not employ the zoom device in the same way as most film flashbacks do. In Steen and Turner's examples, the camera zooms in only on the images depicting the events of the past, while the narrator is heard in voice-over. In most flashbacks, however, the zoom-in (or the track-in) is operated upon the character who remembers (and sometimes narrates) the past, upon an object in the present that triggers that recollection (cf. chapter 3, section 3.3.1.2), or upon both. This is the case of the flashback in *Forrest Gump* (1994): the camera tracks in on Forrest's face (shots (a1) and (a2)) as he thinks hard to remember his first shoes. Then, after cutting to the past (b1), and from Forrest's close-up, the camera progressively tracks out to reveal the new shoes (b2). Thus, instead of "zooming in on the past events", as Steen and Turner's audiovisual examples do, flashback scenes that employ the zoom-in or the track-in device usually follow the pattern of calling attention upon the evoking character or upon the anchoring object that prompts the memory. Instances of this are found in

Casablanca (1942)*, A Letter to Three Wives* (1949)*, All About Eve* (1950)*, Singin' in the Rain* (1952)*,The Man Who Shot Liberty Valance* (1962), *The Usual Suspects* (1995) or *Big Fish* (2003)*,* to name a few.

The question now is why film employs the zoom-in and the track-in in flashback scenes in this particular way, differently from TV narrative pieces which are in other respects very similar. The reason may be that those instances of TV discourse, although narrative to a high degree, fall into the category of reporting discourse, whereas film is entirely narrative and also deals with poetic levels. In this sense, it relies much more than TV on character construction, and pays much more attention to details of composition, audiovisual expression, and so on. It is thus a matter of discursive genre differences and of diverse poetic choices. In film, when the zoom-in (or the track-in) draws the viewer's attention upon a character's face right before the introduction of a flashback, it is the character's mind (its operations and contents) where attention is being directed to. Instead of zooming-in or tracking on the events of the past, film narratives focus on the character who recalls and on the evoking process. Once it is made clear that the character is in the course of remembering some particular event, the flashback is introduced, and it is no longer necessary to zoom-in or track-in on the past events.

So far, considering the character's double perspective presented by memory flashbacks, I have just taken into account those cases with a character narrator that verbally leads the way to the flashback. However, there are many memory flashback scenes in which the recollecting character does not take the role of narrator, and still those scenes function in terms of viewpoint compression as if a *past + now* construction were lying behind them.

Let us take, for instance, the famous flashback scene in *Casablanca* (1942). In it, Rick and Ilsa's love affair in Paris is narrated, finally revealing the backstory of their relationship (00:35:30-00:46:20). Before the flashback is introduced, we see Rick and Sam (the pianist) at the bar, once it is closed. With his characteristic tough air, but manifestly bitter and melancholic as well, Rick asks Sam to play "As time goes by". As the music plays, the camera zooms in and focuses

on Rick's close-up (Figure 18, shots (a1) and (a2)), which further dissolves (a3) and marks the transition to Rick and Ilsa's happy days in Paris (b). We now see a cheerful Rick, so dissimilar from the one in present Casablanca that he almost seems a different person. Similarly to what happened in *Forrest Gump*, there is a zoom-in on the main character's face previous to the introduction of the flashback. However, instead of showing the character's eyes closed in an earnest effort to remember, Rick's close-up has him looking "into space", thus signaling his attention being directed towards an immaterial object (could be thoughts, memories, daydreams…) which will be revealed afterwards in the flashback (cf. chapter 3, section 3.2.3). In contrast with Forrest's eagerness to recall, the look "into space" (a common device in the introduction of flashbacks as memories) marks here an effortless, almost inescapable mental process: the images come to Rick's mind without him summoning them up.

a1)

a2)

a3)

b)

Figure 18. Rick's flashback in *Casablanca* (1942)

Although Rick does not verbally express his thoughts and does not narrate what happened in Paris, his look in the close-up leads the way to the flashback. Just like in *Forrest Gump*, there are two narrative spaces in this flashback scene: the space of the present, where the viewpoint of the recalling character (Rick) is located, and the narrative space of the past which gives direct access to the evoked events and to the character's experience of them. Both viewpoints are blended in the flashback, which is accessed from Rick's perspective in the present but is also experienced as Rick did at that time.

In a later scene in the film, once reunited in Casablanca, Ilsa and Rick argue about the past (00:54:35-00:56:30). Ilsa had met Rick the previous night, hoping to explain why she abandoned him in Paris, but he is still bitter about the past. Ilsa then tells him: "Last night I saw what has happened to you. The Rick I knew in Paris, I could tell him. He'd understand. But the one who looked at me with such hatred…". There are two faces of Rick, past and present, and Ilsa sees them separately, as if they belonged to different men (Rick's unified identity is actually decompressed in Ilsa's statement). She cannot look to the past from Rick's eyes, she cannot remember Paris from Rick's present perspective, but the film viewer can. Furthermore, those two viewpoints are accessible to the spectator because they are supported by Rick's unitary identity, which the viewer perceives as such (cf. chapter 5, section 5.2.2). Thus, the spectator sees the Paris flashback from Rick's double perspective, fruit of blending his viewpoint in the present (which includes Rick's bitterness, harshness and self-protective attitude) and his actual experience of the happy days in Paris.

4.3.3   DECOMPRESSION FOR VIEWPOINT

The compression of viewpoints in memory flashbacks, exposed in the previous section, is achieved in particular cases through a decompression of the character's identity. As mentioned above, Ilsa's statement in *Casablanca* decompresses Rick's identity into two separate pieces: the pleasant and loving Rick of Paris, who belongs in the past, and the cold and resentful Rick of present Casablanca. But this decompression of Rick's identity is only reported, not visually represented. In contrast, there are some flashback examples which

take one step further and actually depict a decompression of identity. This process, in turn, allows to represent different viewpoints and to have them simultaneously via viewpoint compression (cf. Dancygier, 2012b: 100-102).

In the final scene in *Marnie* (1964), a flashback to the protagonist's childhood reveals the cause of her sexual trauma, the mystery around which the whole narrative has been revolving around: why she cannot stand being touched by any man, not even by her husband, Mark (01:54:15-01:59:00). In the narrative present, the married couple visits Marnie's mother, Mrs. Edgar, in Marnie's childhood home. When Mark questions Mrs. Edgar about Marnie's trauma, she reacts furiously to Mark's accusations and she struggles with him. Suddenly, Marnie speaks as if she were a little girl: "You let my mama go! You hear? You let my mama go! You're hurtin' my mama!". The events taking place in the movie's present activate Marnie's memory, and in her reaction as a girl past and present are blended. She recalls how sailors used to visit her mother's home, and we now learn that Mrs. Edgar was a prostitute. The flashback narrates one of those visits, which ends with the sailor being killed. It is first in Marnie's mind where the cross-mappings between the present struggle she witnesses and the events depicted in the flashback take place. The terrible event of her childhood is thus projected in the present, and connections are established between Mark and the sailor, and also between the adult and young selves of Marnie and her mother. Furthermore, the flashback takes place in the same living room where the characters are in the present. Thus, the blend is "materialized" in Marnie's reaction, which brings together Marnie's adult self, who suffers from a trauma, and her younger self, who experienced the events that caused that trauma.

However, Marnie's identity is presented as decompressed, for her unitary self is depicted as composed of two clearly separate pieces: the adult Marnie, with the physical appearance of the present time, and the young Marnie, revealed in the somewhat childish voice and in the way she speaks of the past using the present tense (for instance, "I got to help my mama"). This decompression of identity is maintained throughout the scene. When the flashback is introduced, we actually

see little Marnie in it, but her reactions to what happens in the flashback come always from the present. For instance, when Marnie hits the sailor in the flashback, adult Marnie makes also a gesture with her hand, as if she were hitting the man in the present, and then says "There, there now". Marnie is reliving the past, and she reacts to it as if she were in it again. This is only possible in the blend of past and present. Once the man is killed and the flashback is over, the blend dissolves. This is also signaled by Mark's words: "All right, it's all over". Marnie does not speak as a little girl any more, her identity being no longer decompressed. She is now (at least partly) liberated from her haunting past.

Analyzing narrative literary examples, Dancygier (2012b: 102) identifies several cases which employ a narrative technique that she labels "decompression [of identity] for viewpoint compression", and that is, I argue, the same narrative operation that is set to play in this scene from *Marnie*. Crucially, the decompression of Marnie's identity in this scene makes two different viewpoints available: Marnie's perspective as a traumatized adult and her direct experience of the events which left her wounded. In having Marnie as an adult behaving as her younger self there is a compression of those two viewpoints, which are thus simultaneously accessible for the viewer. It is not just that little Marnie (with her short age, immaturity, fears, etc.) takes over the scene for a while, both in the present and in the flashback. Adult Marnie's perspective is compressed with it, and thus what she experienced as a child is looked at from the position of the woman she has grown into.

This technique of identity decompression pushes the envelope in certain film flashbacks where the recalling character does not just show in the present some traits of his past self, but he actually inhabits the past in his adult physicality, as if he had travelled back in time. One of the childhood flashbacks at the beginning of *Annie Hall* (1977) (00:04:05-00:05:25), for instance, shows adult Alvin in the middle of a class back in his school days (a detailed analysis of the scene applying Blending Theory can be found in Dancygier, 2006).

Figure 19. Vivian's childhood flashback in *Wit* (2001)

Several examples of this kind of flashback are also found in *Wit* (2001), a film about a poetry professor, Vivian, who reassesses her life when she is diagnosed with terminal cancer. In one of the flashbacks in the film (00:34:10-00:38:10), Vivian remembers how she fell in love with words: "I can recall the time, the very hour of the very day when I knew words would be my life's work". This statement introduces the flashback, which shows little Vivian reading a book and asking her father about one of the words she cannot understand. After establishing the position of both characters in the living room, the scene continues by repeating a shot/reverse shot pattern, as Figure 19

shows. In the very first fragment of the scene, the flashback depicts the narrative space of the past (shots (a), (b) and (c)), but in shot (d), which shows adult (and cancerous) Vivian now occupying the position of her younger self, past and present are blended.

In its first stage, the blend is constructed by projecting the scene from the past as one of the input spaces, and Vivian's adult self as the other one. However, Vivian's younger self is also projected from the past narrative space, and the result is a decompression of Vivian's identity which is depicted in the flashback by presenting Vivian with her adult physical appearance and the voice and attitude of a little girl (shots (d) and (f)). Those two separate pieces of Vivian's identity represent two different viewpoints of hers: that of a sick woman who looks back and reflects on her life, and that of a little girl who experiences the magic of words for the first time. As it was the case with *Marnie*, the decompression of identity in this scene serves the purpose of representing two separate viewpoints and further compressing them to make them simultaneously available. This double process of compression and decompression, as contradictory as it may seem, is actually essential to the construction of any conceptual integration network. Elements in the blend are projected back to their respective input spaces: in this case, traits of adult Vivian are continuously connected to the present space, while the features of Vivian as a girl are linked to the past space. Thus, both parts of Vivian's identity can be hold separately. But, at the same time, the viewpoints offered by those two pieces are compressed in the blended space of past and present. This is only one of many examples that show how "the understanding [of any integration network] (...) is crucially a matter of activating and connecting compressions and decompressions simultaneously in the entire network" (Fauconnier & Turner, 2002: 119).

It is interesting to note that, in the flashback as a blended space, Vivian's father does not react with surprise at seeing her in her adult looks. His attitude is the same throughout the scene, thus signaling that he just sees Vivian as a child, as he actually sees her in the past narrative space. This is because the blend of past and present is constructed from the perspective of adult Vivian recalling the past,

and, alongside her, from the viewer's position. Throughout the film, Vivian looks into the camera and speaks directly to the viewer, thus constructing a "shared present space" for both (Dancygier, 2006: 9-10), and it is from the perspective of this "shared present" that the blend is created. In fact, this flashback is introduced by Vivian's statement ("I can recall the time...") directed to the viewer, of whose presence she is aware and whose attention she directs towards the flashback (cf. chapter 3). The blend of past and present is, then, a construction available as such for adult Vivian and the viewer, but not for Vivian's father, who is just an element of it. Oddly enough, the point-of-view shots like (d) or (f) that in principle depict the father's perspective do not actually show what he *sees* (secondary internal ocularization), but what the viewer is made to see inside the blend.

The blend enters a second stage when the location of the scene suddenly changes: the home living room from the past is substituted by Vivian's hospital room in the present space (see Figure 20). The transition is smooth because of the continuity given to the scene by the recurrence of the shot/reverse shot pattern. Thus, the sequence depicted in Figure 19 ends with a shot of Vivian in the living room (f), and this one is followed by its corresponding reverse shot of the father, now in the hospital room (g). But how does this change of location work in the blend? It is clear that adult Vivian and the hospital room are projected from the present space input. Also, little Vivian, her father and the living room are projected from the past space. However, this last space is also shaped by a frame that we could call "conversation between two people in a shot/reverse shot form"[45], and which is projected to the blend. Furthermore, the "generic space" of this blend, consisting of elements common to both input spaces, contains an element called "Vivian" (her entire self or being) and an element called "room" defined by a spatial disposition "x". These items from the generic space map onto their counterparts in each of the inputs: there is an adult version of Vivian in the present

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[45] Note that not only elements from the Reference space are projected to the blend, but also aspects belonging to the Presentation space, such as the shot/reverse shot scheme. Thus both spaces (blended in the Virtual space) play significant roles in the construction of conceptual integration networks in film (cf. chapter 3; Oakley & Tobin, 2012).

space, and a young version of her in the past space; also, there is the hospital room in the present and the living room in the past, and both rooms share a similar spatial disposition of the seats occupied by the characters (bed/divan and chair).
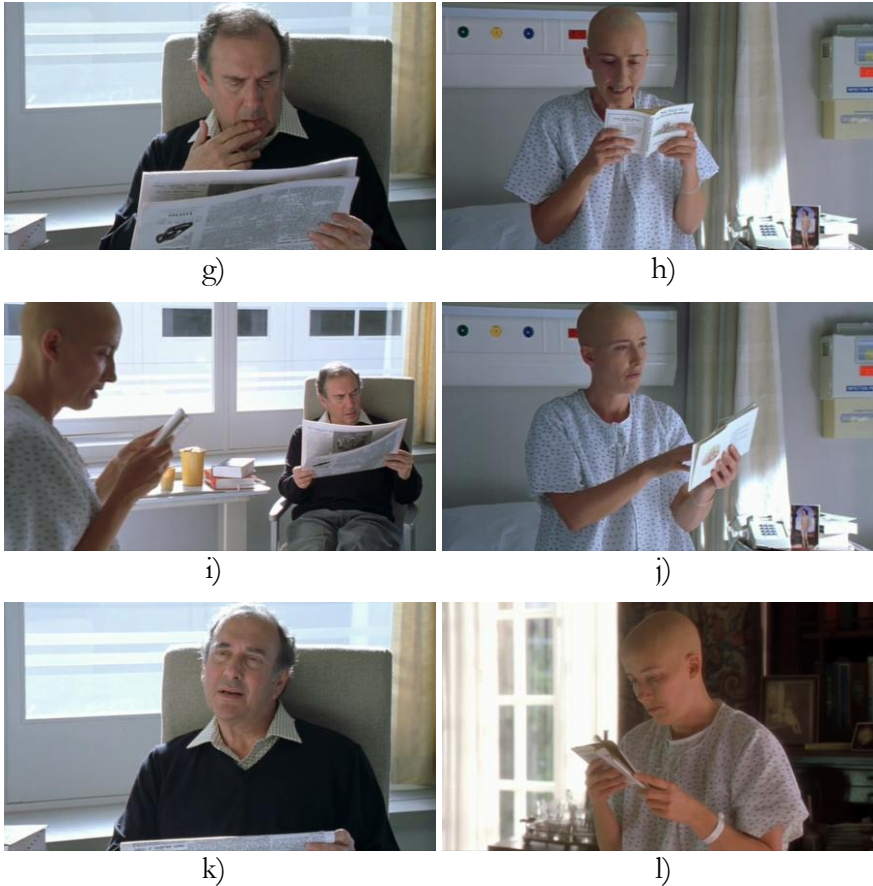

Figure 20. Continuation of Vivian's flashback in *Wit* (2001)

All in all, the blend of past and present in the flashback scene is shaped by the projection and integration of all these elements: Vivian (both adult and young), her father, the frame conversation in a shot/counter shot form, and a room where the scene takes place, and

which is alternatively projected from the present (hospital) or from the past (living room). Actually, the scene goes back and forth between both locations: as Figure 20 shows, after a few shots in the hospital (g-k) action is naturally brought back to the living room (l).

The scene goes on in the living room, in a similar way to what is depicted in Figure 19. It is only interrupted briefly by a shot of Vivian in the present narrative space, thoughtful and looking into space, while an auditory flashback of the conversation between little Vivian and her father is heard in the background. This way the blend is momentarily put on hold, but it promptly resumes and once more shows its capacity to switch locations without confusing the viewer. As shown in Figure 21, the flashback scene is closed by going back to the past narrative space alone, which depicts little Vivian without any features of her adult self (n). The blend of past and present is thus dissolved. Then the narrative takes us back to the present but, surprisingly, we find in it that the blend is still gasping its last breath. What, following the established structure of the blend, would have been the corresponding reverse shot to (n), a shot showing Vivian's father on the chair, is actually a shot of Vivian speaking to an empty seat (o). The blend is not fully alive, because Vivian's father is no longer in it, but there is still an integration of past and present. Vivian's identity is still decompressed (she looks like an adult, but speaks like a child), and the corresponding viewpoints are also compressed in the scene. Vivian talks to the empty chair as if she were talking to her father, and actually uses the present tense ("The little bunnies in the picture *are sleeping*! *They're sleeping* like you said, because of 'so-por-fic'!"), although she is no longer holding the book in her hands. It is in this last moment of Vivian's reliving of the past where the blend takes one last gasp before dissolving definitely.

The transition from the blended space (what remains of it) to the present narrative space is marked by Vivian's look off-screen in (p). Her gaze, directed in the previous shot towards the imagined presence of her father in the blended space, is now located in the present space and points at the space of the past, looking at it from a distance. Vivian's deictic gaze (cf. Persson, 2003) thus marks the shift from the blend to the present space.

Finally, Vivian turns her gaze towards the camera in (q) and speaks directly to the viewer, now using the past tense that sets the distance between this look from the present and the past as its object ("The illustration *bore out* the meaning of the word, just as he *had explained* it. At the time it *seemed* like magic"). This second turn of Vivian's gaze, as well as this last statement of hers signal the permanent closing of the flashback and the return of the narrative to the present space. Vivian's deictic gaze is used once more in (r) to point at the past space, but this look just reaffirms the present as deictic centre and the distance now established between present and past narrative spaces.

Figure 21. Closing of Vivian's flashback in *Wit* (2001)

Summing up, although the structure of this flashback is much more complex in blending terms than the one in *Marnie*, both examples employ decompression of identity similarly, and this decompression results in a compression of viewpoints. Vivian's flashback offers an up-close look at little Vivian's experience of the magic of words, but approaches that experience from the present perspective of adult Vivian, who is re-evaluating her life. The scene compresses both viewpoints, and so the happiness and untroubled days of Vivian's childhood are blended with her melancholic look and her regrets as an adult. It is a complex and creative example that shows the fruitfulness of "decompression for viewpoint" in film.

4.3.4   REPLAY FLASHBACKS

Another instance of at least two different viewpoints being compressed is that of "replay flashbacks". This kind of retrospection, as introduced in chapter 2 (section 2.1.2), results from a relation of frequency between "story time" and "discourse time". Specifically, an event that occurs just once in the fabula is represented (that is, enacted, and not just recounted) at least twice in the syuzhet, and the repeated scene that revisits those past events constitutes a replay flashback (cf. Bordwell, 2013c).

This repetition at the level of the syuzhet may be visual or auditory (or both). Visual replay flashbacks (usually accompanied by their corresponding diegetic sound) are the most common, and examples are found in renowned films such as *Citizen Kane* (1941), *Vertigo* (1958), *The Man Who Shot Liberty Valance* (1962) or *The Shawshank Redemption* (1994). Auditory replay flashbacks, although not that widespread, are employed in scenes in which the past is recalled without leaving the present narrative space (i.e. the past is enacted only by means of sound, and thus intrudes into the present). An example of this is found at the end of *The Usual Suspects* (1995) (01:39:15-01:42:35): once the case seems to be solved and Verbal is gone after the interrogation, agent Kujan relaxes and thinks about what happened, showing some satisfaction for his good work. Then, some pieces of information on the wall in front of him call his attention, and he progressively realizes that Verbal made up his story along the way using information around him, and thus practically

everything he said was a lie. Fragments of Verbal's narration are replayed as the corresponding words and images on the wall are shown, while Kujan looks at them and understands he has been fooled. In the scene, auditory flashbacks are employed to not interrupt the flow of events in the present (although glimpses of the past are shown at times): that way, the pieces of information in the present serve as narrative anchors to Verbal's narration (i.e. to the auditory flashbacks), and the viewer can experience Kujan's process of realization alongside the character.

Bordwell (2017: 77) points out two different functions fulfilled by replay flashbacks: revelation and reminder. They constitute reminders because they enact events already seen or heard, but at the same time they are revelation pieces because they add information that was previously omitted (i.e. they fill in some narrative gaps). Elsewhere, Bordwell (2013a) also says that, apart from advancing the plot, replay flashbacks may be used to emphasize characterization. A fundamental trait of replay flashbacks, and one directly involved in the fulfillment of these and other functions, is the compression of two or more viewpoints as a result of replaying a scene. This multiplicity of perspectives from which a particular event is presented has been pointed out by Dancygier (2008, 2012b) with regard to written narratives, and a similar process seems to be at play in cinematic replay flashbacks. This kind of device involves two scenes: one depicting an event in the present narrative space, and a second one, shown later than the first one, which replays the event of the first scene (usually) from a different perspective.

For instance, *Atonement* (2007), based on Ian McEwan's novel of the same title, employs replay scenes throughout the narrative in order to show the subjective viewpoint of one of the characters (Briony) regarding certain events of which she is a witness. The film tells the unfortunate events that are triggered when Briony, a girl who aspires to be a writer, misinterprets the relationship between her sister (Cecilia) and their housekeeper's son (Robbie). The assumptions she makes lead her to falsely accuse Robbie of a crime he did not commit. At the beginning of the film (00:06:25-00:07:55), looking out her bedroom window, Briony sees Robbie and Cecilia next to the

fountain on their house's grounds. There seems to be a confrontation between Cecilia and Robbie, and eventually she undresses, dives into the fountain, comes out a bit later and leaves after dressing again. This scene is replayed shortly after (00:09:35-00:13:00), now from Cecilia and Robbie's perspective, and reveals that their discussion had to do with an antique vase being broken. The first scene is constrained by the limits of Briony's epistemic, optical and auditory viewpoint, marked in the first place by point-of-view shots that depict the girl's optical perspective. From her bedroom window she sees Robbie and Cecilia at a great distance (Figure 22, shot (a)), and she cannot hear their conversation. Thus, she cannot but suppose what is going on between them, since she is also lacking the appropriate context to interpret the situation correctly. On the other hand, the second scene (i.e. the replay flashback) is built upon a shot/reverse shot structure that represents Cecilia and Robbie's perceptual viewpoint throughout their confrontation (shot (b)), and the scene also aligns with the protagonists' epistemic viewpoint. Thus, in the replay the viewer learns the reason why they are both arguing and why Cecilia dives into the water. But, most importantly, in watching this second scene the viewer immediately recalls the first one and establishes connections between both. In the story-blend, the narrative events depicted are seen from a double viewpoint: Briony's (first scene), and Robbie and Cecilia's (replay scene). It is because these two perspectives upon the same event are compressed that we can now suppose that Briony has misinterpreted what she has seen (she thinks that Robbie is a pervert who is harassing her sister); thus, Briony's evaluative viewpoint emerges in the blend. This way, the compression of viewpoints is at the service of character construction: Briony has been previously presented as an imaginative girl who likes writing stories; actually, she has just finished a short play that she hopes to stage at home that very evening. The fountain scene hints at her fanciful character, one prone to fantasize and thirsty for drama, and this trait of her personality will be central in the development of the plot. Indeed, because she makes up a story in her head based on things she sees, she wrongly accuses Robbie, and this will tragically affect several people's lives.

a)   b)

Figure 22. Replay flashback in *Atonement* (2007)

Apart from contributing to character construction, replay flashbacks usually serve to reveal the truth about an occurrence narrated in the first scene. That is, they provide information that was missing in the previous scene (although in some cases, as will be explained below, it is ambiguity that prevails). As Bordwell (2013c) observes, the first scene may omit information in two different ways: sometimes "the narration is openly suppressive: it announces that it's not telling us certain things", and thus we expect the mystery to be solved later. In other cases, "the presentation of the initial scene might be covertly suppressive; it hides things and doesn't tell us it's hiding them". Clear examples of openly suppressive narration are found in *Mildred Pierce* (1945) and *The Usual Suspects* (1995): at the beginning of both films someone is shot dead, but the identity of the killer is concealed. Both narratives later reveal who the killer is in a replay flashback at the end of the film[46].

On the other hand, there is covertly suppressive narration in *Vertigo* (1958) and *The Man Who Shot Liberty Valance* (1962), for instance. In *Vertigo*, the scene in which Scottie witnesses Madeleine's suicide at the Mission (1:13:20-1:15:40) does not hint at any facts

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[46] *The Usual Suspects* (1995), however, is a particular case, since that replay flashback at the end of the film (01:31:13-01:32:42), which enacts what Verbal says he saw at the pier, is soon found to be a lie. The truth is immediately revealed in another replay, as Kujan realizes he has been tricked: Verbal is not the victim he claims to be, but the crime lord Keyser Söze himself. The film is a well-known example of unreliable narration, a most interesting and broadly studied topic that, however, will not be discussed here because it would require a greater depth and extension than could be offered in this work.

being hidden. The scene is aligned with Scottie's epistemic and perceptual viewpoint (Figure 23, shots (a) and (b)), and he does not even suspect that he is being fooled and that the woman he has been following is not Madeleine, but her double. Later on, a replay flashback from Judy's viewpoint (1:37:35-1:38:30) reveals what actually happened at the Mission (shots (c) and (d)): the body of the real Madeleine (already dead) is thrown from the bell tower, so that is the body that the police will find, while Judy hides at the top with Mr. Elster, Madeleine's husband and the one who has drawn a plan to kill her.
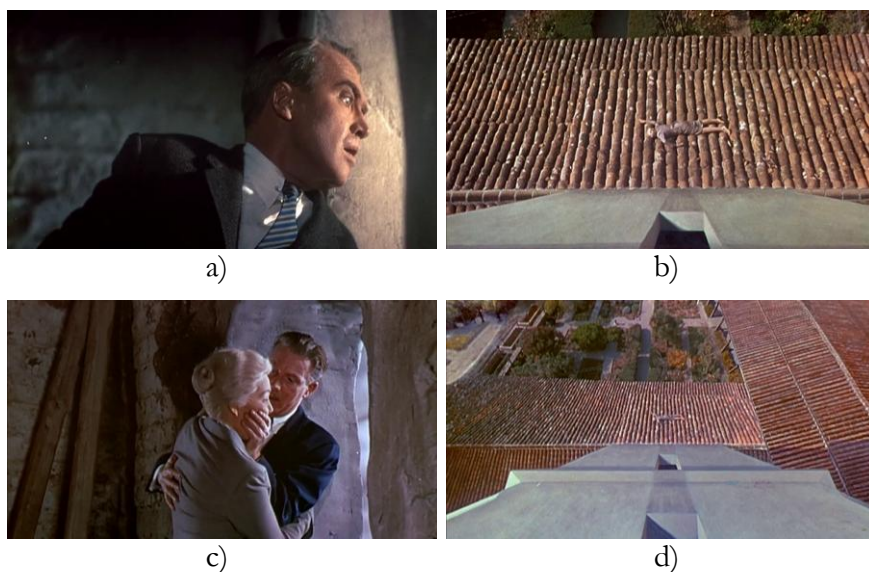

Figure 23. Replay flashback in *Vertigo* (1958)

When watching the replay scene, the viewer recalls Scottie's version of the facts, and thus the replay prompts for the compression of two different viewpoints: Scottie's and Judy's. It is with the compression of these two perspectives that the secret about Madeleine's identity is unveiled: both viewpoints are needed in the story-blend in order to understand that Scottie has been fooled and that Judy has been pretending all along. Furthermore, this play with

double viewpoint also contributes to character construction, since it builds up Scottie's obsessive behavior towards Madeleine and stresses Scottie's foolishness of not suspecting anything at all. Similarly, Judy's character is also developed through this double perspective on the events: her involvement in the crime gets a guilty overtone when it is opposed to credulous Scottie's experience. However, she must keep everything secret, and that will later complicate things as Scottie grows obsessed with her (Judy) because of her resemblance with Madeleine, and also because she has fallen in love with Scottie.

As the replay examples analyzed so far show, in many cases the initial scene and its replay complement each other, so that together they offer a complete and true account of the events narrated. Nevertheless, it may also be the case that the two (or more) versions of the facts are contradictory in such a way that they cannot be reconciled, and thus the truth about what happened remains unclear. The classical example is, of course, *Rashomon* (1950), where different witnesses of a crime narrate what they saw, each one from their own viewpoint, and as a result the viewer is left with multiple versions but no final truth. Reality is presented as ambiguous, and human beings' capacity to do good is questioned, although in the end there is a glimmer of hope (cf. Pramaggiore & Wallis, 2005: 55-57). In between these two options (the truth about the facts and the ambiguity created by clearly contradictory versions) there is a third one: a replay may *seem* to be showing the true story, what actually happened, but a closer look to detail tells us that is not the case. Such an example is found in *The Man Who Shot Liberty Valance* (1962), a western built on the opposition between the Wild West, represented by Tom Doniphon, and the civilized order coming from the East, embodied by the lawyer Ransom Stoddard. When Stoddard faces the outlaw Liberty Valance in a gunfight and he kills him, he becomes a local hero (01:30:50-01:35:20). But later on in the film a replay flashback shows the shootout from Doniphon's epistemic and perceptual viewpoint, and it reveals that it was actually Doniphon who killed Valance (01:55:40-01:59:00). As shown in Figure 24, the first scene narrates the gunfight from Stoddard's viewpoint (epistemic and perceptual) (shot (a)), while the replay presents Doniphon's version of the facts (shot (b)). As in earlier examples, both viewpoints are compressed through the replay

flashback, since revisiting the shootout brings to the viewer's mind the first narration of it. In the story-blend, both perspectives are needed in order to understand the scene of Liberty Valance's death at different levels: spatial, perceptual, epistemic, experiential, etc. Also, this double viewpoint contributes to character construction: Stoddard's heroic figure of the first scene is now reduced to that of a man worthy of pity because he owes his fame to the action of another man; he is publicly exalted at the expense of another. This change of the character in the viewer's eyes does not just emerge from the replay scene, but from compressing the viewpoint in that scene with Stoddard's perspective in the first: it is in that contrast and in having both viewpoints on the same event at the same time that we come to see the character in a new light.

a)   b)

Figure 24. Replay flashback in
The Man Who Shot Liberty Valance (1962)

Nevertheless, although the replay scene in *The Man Who Shot Liberty Valance* has generally been understood as the one telling the true version of the facts, an experiment in "forensic film analysis" developed by Stephen Mamber (2016) has lately tried to prove the contrary. He has designed an application (*Who Shot Liberty Valance?*) which provides the means to study in detail the initial gunfight scene and its replay. The user can watch both scenes in parallel and compare them (Mamber also calls attention to some details, such as what happens with Liberty's hat in the two scenes), he can observe the characters' positions through a diagram, and explore a 3D model of both scenes. Furthermore, Mamber compiles a series of references

about the film that to a greater or lesser extent support his thesis about the replay flashback. All in all, what Mamber tries to show with this "forensic analysis" is that *The Man Who Shot Liberty Valance*

> may present two conflicting versions, neither of which is necessarily more "true" than the other. (…) It can be seen as part of the great modern tradition of films which show key events from several vantage points, and allow the viewer to experience complexity rather than simple resolution. (Mamber, 2016)

That is, contrary to what has been the usual reading of the film, Doniphon's version of the facts (narrated in the replay flashback) would not be the one telling the truth. Some of the details of his account make it little plausible (e.g. if he really was with Pompey in that alley, Stoddard could have very easily seen them). But this does not make Stoddard's perspective the true one either: rather, it leaves the door open for ambiguity. Building upon what some authors have pointed out (cf. McGee, 2007, for instance), a likely conclusion may be that neither Stoddard nor Doniphon alone killed Liberty, and thus neither of them is completely a hero. Also, both of them had to sacrifice something: Stoddard has to go on with his life being aware that both his career and his marriage are built on a myth, and Doniphon gives up his love for Hallie and helps "killing" the Wild West. In fact, Stoddard and Doniphon are two sides of the same coin, two faces of the same man, and thus both of them are "the man who shot Liberty Valance" (cf. Roche & Hosle, 1994). This interpretation of the film also calls for the compression of two viewpoints mentioned above, and maybe in a more blatant way: the gunfight scene compresses both Stoddard's and Doniphon's perspective of the facts, but in the story-blend both are equally "true", which results in the emergence of ambiguity and uncertainty.

Certainly, since reaching this interpretation of the shootout scenes requires carefully attending to details, and since most viewers will not notice the slight variations between the initial scene and the replay (e.g. how Liberty Valance's hat falls differently in each of the scenes), it may be said that this reading of the film is only possible as a result of thorough film analysis (which does not make it any less valid). Indeed, filmmakers take advantage in a variety of ways of the viewers'

inability to notice and recall every detail of a scene. Bordwell (2008, 2013c) demonstrates this by analyzing the first scene in *Mildred Pierce* (1945), in which a murder is committed, and its replay as a flashback at the end of the film, where the identity of the killer is revealed. In the first scene (00:01:40-00:02:20) we see Monty (Mildred's husband) being shot dead, and in his last breath he whispers Mildred's name. Immediately a door is heard closing, presumably as the killer leaves the house. Two alternative hypotheses are made after this scene: either Mildred is the killer (and then we want to know why she did it), or somebody else is (and we want to find out who) (Bordwell, 2008: 139-140). It is not until the replay flashback at the end of the film (01:45:20-01:49:45) that the viewer discovers who the killer is (Veda, Mildred's daughter from a previous marriage). Interestingly, there are some inconsistencies between the first scene and the replay (e.g. how Monty falls down when he is shot and how he murmurs "Mildred"), but the viewer does not notice them because both scenes depict the same action, which is the essential point (see Bordwell, 2008, 2013c, for a detailed shot-by-shot analysis of the similarities and differences). While watching a scene viewers tend to focus on causal and event-centered information, which is perceptually salient (Bordwell, 2008: 147), and then make inferences based on that information. Thus, they only retain that which is essential to understand the story and forget about non-prominent details. In this case, because of the direction of Monty's gaze while he whispers "Mildred", the viewer forms one possible hypothesis: that of Mildred being the killer. But in the replay scene Monty's look is directed elsewhere while murmuring, revealing that he was not naming his killer. Furthermore, the first scene triggers other inferences by inconspicuously hiding information (Bordwell, 2013c): relying on the viewer's assumption of temporal continuity when a cut takes place within the same location, the first scene conceals an ellipsis that is later narrated in the replay (Bordwell, 2008: 148-149). Thus, in the first scene, after the door is heard closing we see Monty lying dead in a long shot, and it seems that there is nobody else in the house. But the replay flashback reveals that Mildred had just come in (hence the sound of the door), and then she had a confrontation with Veda. All this is omitted in the first scene to misguide the viewer, who does not suspect of Veda because he does

not even know that she was at the scene of the crime. The viewer then makes other inferences that the replay flashback later refutes.

All in all, the goal of this section was to discuss the compression of at least two different viewpoints in replay flashbacks, and how it contributes to the advance of the plot and to character construction. Furthermore, double (or multiple) viewpoint in such scenes may serve to build clarity, as in *Vertigo* (1958), or, on the contrary, to create ambiguity, as in *The Man Who Shot Liberty Valance* (1962) and *Rashomon* (1950). In all cases, the compression of viewpoints in the viewer's mind is the key to the understanding of the initial scene alongside its replay, which in turn affects the comprehension of the film as a whole.

5

TIME COMPRESSION

5.1 TIME IN FILM

5.1.1   NARRATIVE TIME IN FILM

There have been varied approaches to the study of time in film, ranging from the application of the concepts proposed by narratology in literary studies (cf., for instance, Stam et al., 1996; Pérez-Bowie, 2008) to the consideration of time as an intrinsic element of cinema (cf., for instance, Currie, 1995a: 92-103; Powell, 2012). The purpose of this chapter, however, is not to delve into the nature of filmic time in a philosophical sense, nor to offer an exhaustive revision of time-related narrative concepts and their application to film. Rather, its aim is to discuss narrative time in cinema from a cognitive perspective, and more specifically to explain how the viewer successfully comes up with the appropriate temporal meaning when watching a flashback.

 As exposed in chapter 2 (section 2.1), Bordwell (1995 [1985]) draws upon Genette's (1972) proposal of temporal relations between story and discourse to develop a classification of the relations between story time and narration time in film in terms of order, duration, and frequency. Specifically, flashbacks result from altering in the narration the order of events in the fabula. Furthermore, regarding duration Bordwell (1995 [1985]) distinguishes three different levels in cinema: fabula, syuzhet, and screen duration. The interplay between these three levels gives way to a series of temporal effects in cinematic narrations which, as will be explained below, rely upon cognitive processes of different kinds and thus become comprehensible for the viewer.

Moreover, as discussed earlier in different places (cf. chapter 3, sections 3.3.2 and 3.3.3), the rupture that a given flashback causes in

the fabula's linear structure does not prompt the viewer to reconstruct the original sequence of events in order to understand the story. The past is rather "a scattered jumble of events which form a coherent sense of 'what happened'" (Dancygier, 2012a: 46). Also, there is no pre-established mould of narrative time which must be filled in. Rather,

> [t]he viewer will only try to map the temporal relations between the different storylines if these are important for understanding the interaction between them. Macro-temporal structures are, as a rule, constructed by a bottom-up process inferred by cues in the individual scene. (Grodal, 2002 [1997]: 140)

Similarly, Dancygier (2012a: 35) argues that flashbacks are not employed with the purpose of filling the gaps in the story timeline, "but to fill the gaps in relevant links between [characters] experiences and motives" in a narrative. The story-blend thus emerges as a result of a series of connections taking place in the viewer's mind between different elements in narrative spaces, and the narrative's temporal features emerge also as a consequence of those multiple links and blends between spaces.

5.1.2   PAST AND PRESENT TIME

Unlike verbal language, which denotes time by means of verbal tenses, or through temporal deictic units, such as *tomorrow* or *then* in English, film does not possess its own specific units with a temporal meaning. For one thing, film images have no tense (cf., for instance, Branigan, 1984: 218; Currie, 1995a: 198-206; Bordwell, 2004)[47]. Indeed, films unfold in the present for the viewer: that is, it is in his own present time where the viewer watches a movie. But this "presentness" of the images does not imply that the fictional events in the diegesis are taken by the viewer as belonging to the present tense (Currie, 1995a: 200). If that were the case, how would we make sense of anachronies, and particularly of flashbacks? If every shot in a

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[47] Some authors, however, defend the opposite position; that is, they argue in favor of the "presentness" of the cinematographic image because the default interpretation is that of the image corresponding to a present tense (cf., for instance, Gaudreault & Jost, 1990: 101-104).

movie is understood as present, where does the meaning of past in a flashback come from? Rather than a question of tense, Currie argues (1995a: 206-208), it is a matter of relative position of events in the story (cf. also Bordwell, 2004: 212-215). Thus, instead of speaking of events as being present, past or future, it would be more accurate to employ relative terms such as earlier or later than, and contemporaneous with. This way, flashbacks are understood as depicting events that take place in the story before other events already narrated. Those images do not correspond to a past tense, but are comprehended as past with regard to other episodes in the story.

Still, if relative temporal position is what determines a narrative anachrony, how does the viewer know that he is dealing with a flashback and not with a flashforward? In other words, if sequential events A and B are narrated as B-A, there is the possibility of A being a flashback or, on the contrary, there is the option of B being a flashforward that then returns to the present (A). The first event narrated in the film may be taken as an anchor for the remaining episodes to be narrated, but even that first happening could be a flashback or flashforward itself (Currie, 1995a: 213). The guiding principles that determine which kind of anachrony we are dealing with in each case, Currie argues (1995a: 214), "have to do with simplicity" and with the use of auxiliary cues that emphasize particular kinds of connections between story events (e.g. a character recalling certain episodes is usually a cue for a flashback, not a flashforward, since memory links the present with the past). Thus, when confronting an anachronous sequence, the simplest explanation is chosen first, and complex alternatives are only considered when necessary (Currie, 1995a: 214). That is why in *Arrival* (2016), for instance, the first assumption made by the viewer is that the anachronous scenes at the beginning of the film are flashbacks: it is the simplest explanation, and it makes sense in terms of causal relations between events, character memory and motives (cf. chapter 3, section 3.3.2). It is not until later on in the film that the viewer, taking into account all the information the narrative has been offering him, must reconsider those scenes as flashforwards.

On the other hand, even though film images have no tense, they are often accompanied by verbal expressions which point to different moments in the story, mark the passage of time or the temporal relation between events, etc. More specifically, flashbacks are frequently introduced by a verbal space builder that clearly indicates that the narrative space being activated belongs to a prior moment in the story (cf. chapter 3, section 3.3.1.1). However, verbal space builders are not indispensable in the construction of flashbacks, as examples in chapter 3 have already shown. In such cases where flashbacks are activated by means of pure visual or auditory (but non-verbal) cues, the retrospection sequence is not understood as narrating past events because the images that make it up show explicit cues from a past time, but because of the various kinds of connections established between the elements in both narrative spaces (past and present). Ultimately, the idea of past associated with a given flashback emerges in the story-blend as a result of a series of connections between narrative spaces, and particularly due to the Time vital relations that link elements in both spaces, as will be discussed in the following section.

5.2 COMPRESSION OF TIME VITAL RELATIONS

5.2.1   TIME COMPRESSION: SCALING AND SYNCOPATION

As stated above, flashbacks are understood as past not only because of the space builders that activate past narrative spaces, but also because of the Time vital relations that are established between present and past spaces. Blending Theory employs the term "vital relations" to refer to "[t]he most frequent and important mental connections" within and between mental spaces (Turner, 2015: 211). These recurring links may be of different kinds, and Fauconnier and Turner (2002: 101) list those which appear repeatedly: Change, Identity, Time, Space, Cause-Effect, Part-Whole, Representation, Role, Analogy, Disanalogy, Property, Similarity, Category, Intentionality, and Uniqueness. As argued by Blending Theory, one of the fundamental operations in conceptual integration processes is that of compressing vital relations either into tighter versions of themselves or into other vital relations.

Some vital relations are conceptualized in terms of a "string", that is, an interval or chain (Fauconnier & Turner, 2002: 114). Time is one of those vital relations: a lifetime, for instance, is conceived as the temporal interval between an individual's birth and his death. That string of time can be compressed into a tighter version of itself by means of two processes: *scaling* and *syncopation* (Fauconnier & Turner, 2002: 312-314). Scaling of time is a fundamental concept in the cognitive analysis of flashbacks, since the shortening of the temporal interval existing between present and past is essential to the nature of the device. As explained above (cf. chapter 3, section 3.3.1.3), flashbacks do not take us back to a previous time in the story by making us go in reverse chronological order through all the events separating the present moment from the past event depicted in the flashback (not even in a rewind, fast mode). Obviously, such a technique would go against narrative "economy" and, instead of making the understanding of a film easier, it would turn out tiresome. Furthermore, that is not even the way we recall past events in our own lives (cf. Fauconnier & Turner, 2002: 316-317). Instead, flashbacks involve a leap from the present narrative space to a past space, and the time elapsed between them in the story is scaled down and rendered as a simple switch which usually takes no more than a few seconds, or even less. Moreover, in some flashbacks past and present co-occur, as when the narrator's voice coming from the present is heard while images of past events are shown (a case of enacted recounting), or, conversely, when an auditory flashback intrudes into the present. These are also instances of time compression through scaling.

As exposed in chapter 3, the leap to the past may be clearly signaled by different devices or may instead be completely uncued. In *Sunset Blvd.* (1950), for instance, the narrator's voice introduces the flashback ("Let's go back about six months and find the day when it all started"), and thus six months of story time are scaled down to a few seconds of screen time, which is the duration of the transition dissolve. In other cases flashbacks are cued by means of a narrative anchor, either visual or auditory, as in *The Help* (2011) and *Ordinary People* (1980). Both the bench in *The Help* and the laugh in *Ordinary People* work as anchoring devices that connect two different narrative

spaces in the story (past and present), and thus they also serve to scale down the time link between them. Thus, the bench and the laugh functioning as narrative anchors compress the temporal interval between present and past and make the flashback transition compact and cognitively efficient, all of which serves the viewer's successful comprehension of the scenes.

On the other hand, uncued flashbacks, like the ones in *Manchester by the Sea* (2016), also rely on the time vital relations that connect present and past narrative spaces. The narrative in *Manchester by the Sea* switches back and forth between present and past, and those two spaces are linked by a time relation. However, that connection is not crystal clear (i.e. it is uncued), and it is only established by the spectator in the process of inferring the cause-effect links between narrative spaces and the characters' motivations guiding their actions. Once established, that time link is also scaled down, thus making it possible for the narrative to continuously leap from present to past by bridging the eight-year gap that lies between both.

The second kind of process for compressing a time relation is that of syncopation. Given an interval or string of time, syncopation is the cognitive operation that activates only certain points of that string (Fauconnier & Turner, 2002: 114). This process it the one behind narrative ellipses and montage sequences (cf. chapter 2, section 2.1.2). Particularly, some flashbacks employ syncopation for the depiction of events occurred in the past, and they do so in the form of a montage sequence, a narrative device which consists of "[a] segment of a film that summarizes a topic or compresses a passage of time into brief symbolic or typical images. Frequently dissolves, fades, superimpositions, and wipes are used to link the images in a montage sequence" (Bordwell & Thompson, 2008: 479). An excellent example of a montage-sequence flashback is the famous breakfast scene in *Citizen Kane* (1941) (00:49:25-00:54:40). In it, a significant period of story time (a few years of marriage) is compressed into a few minutes of screen time. And it is precisely the conciseness of the scene what makes it all the more sharp. At the beginning, as Figure 25 shows, the camera tracks in towards the couple (a), who are sitting close to each other and appear in the same shot. From there, the scene consists of a

series of marriage conversations at breakfast through the years, and the technique employed throughout is the shot/reverse shot (some examples can be seen in Figure 25, shots (b) to (e))[48].

As the scene progresses, the couple's estrangement grows, and finally they stop talking and devote their attention to their newspapers (moreover, it is significant that she does not read her husband's publication, but a rival newspaper). From Kane's medium shot in (e) the camera tracks back until it frames the entire room again and shows the couple in the same shot (f). The contrast with the beginning of the sequence is evident: in the scene's closing, both the physical distance between Kane and his wife, and the increased depth of field serve to express the cooling of the relationship. All in all, the scene successfully expresses the progressive breakdown of the marriage through the years, but compresses that story time by means of syncopation, so that a few key moments in the film condense the marriage's evolution from its inception up to a rift point.

Similar examples are found in *Casablanca* (1942) and *Singin' in the Rain* (1952): in both films there is a flashback in the form of a montage sequence that compresses an interval of time through syncopation. In *Casablanca* the flashback (00:35:30-00:46:20) narrates the love affair in Paris from its beginning and until Ilsa leaves Rick, and it does so by showing some selected episodes from the whole story. In like manner, a flashback in *Singin' in the Rain* (00:04:15-00:11:05) illustrates Don Lockwood's narration of his career as a performer from its humble origins up to his success in Hollywood. The flashback displays some notable moments in Lockwood's career (although the images contradict Lockwood's verbal narration in a funny way), and thus provides an overview of a period of several years condensed into a few minutes on the screen.

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[48] The scene is composed of many more shots than those showed in Figure 25. However, since including all of them here would take up too much space, I have only selected the number that I consider necessary to illustrate the analysis of the scene.

Figure 25. Montage sequence in *Citizen Kane* (1941)

In all these examples of time syncopation the past is rendered as a sum of key moments, and thus the flashback compresses a whole string of events into a set of fundamental episodes. Nevertheless, in such cases, as in every flashback, there is also compression of time via scaling: on the one hand, syncopation affects the past narrative space, for the sequence of events that is compressed belongs to the past in the story; and, on the other hand, the interval of time that exists between the present and the past narrative space is scaled down and compressed into very short screen time (the length of the flashback transition, that is, of the leap from the present to the past). Both in *Casablanca* and *Singin' in the Rain* the dissolve transition to the past takes only a few seconds, but it really compresses a span of several years in the story.

These compressions of time relations in flashbacks, although analyzed at a micro level (that of shots and scenes), actually take place at the level of the blend. The film prompts for the activation of narrative spaces and for the connections between them. Compressions, then, occur at the level of the mega-blend (since multiple blends are involved in the process of story construction; cf. Dancygier, 2012b: 56), and the emergent story is the resulting product. It is then in the story-blend where time relations are scaled down and syncopated, and thus it is in that blend where flashbacks can be understood as such.

5.2.2   IDENTITY AND TIME COMPRESSION

Besides the compression of time vital relations, another connection that is essential in the construction of flashbacks is that of identity. Flashbacks are comprehensible not only by virtue of the time links established between present and past narrative spaces, but also because of the relations of identity that connect characters from both narrative spaces. Certainly, the issue of identity construction is a very complex subject and has been widely studied in different fields. The aim of this section, however, is not to provide an overview of the studies about the configuration of identity in narration, but specifically to explain what identity connections are in terms of vital relations between narrative spaces and how they operate in flashback scenes.

Usually, some of the characters involved in a flashback take part in both the events of the present and of the past. In particular, that is the case with many memory flashbacks, in which the character who recalls in the present frequently appears also in the memories narrated in the past scene (examples of this are the flashbacks in *Casablanca* (1942), *Forrest Gump* (1994), and *The Help* (2011), to name a few). In such cases, an identity connection is established between the character in the present narrative space and the same character in the past space. What prompts the spectator to link both is normally the character's name and context information like the relationship with other characters, as well as the character's appearance in many cases (although, as will be explained below, identity connections are also established when two different actors portray the same character). Nevertheless, although the connection is straightforward for the viewer, there are several compression processes lying behind it. Essentially, the analogies between the character in the present and the same character in the past are compressed into the pairing "identity + no change", while the disanalogies between both versions of the same character are compressed into "identity + change". Finally, identity and change over time are compressed into uniqueness, and that is why the viewer perceives the character in question as a unitary whole (cf. Fauconnier & Turner, 2002: 314-315). In *Casablanca*, for instance, there are several differences between "Paris Rick" and "Casablanca Rick" (basically, the former is cheerful and tender, while the latter is a bitter man), but this does not prevent us from seeing him as a coherent character (cf. chapter 4, section 4.3.2). The disanalogies perceived between both versions of Rick are compressed into the vital relations of identity and change, and thus the contrast between those two selves makes sense in terms of the same identity which has experienced some changes over time. Then, those changes and Rick's identity are compressed (alongside his unchanged qualities) into uniqueness in the story-blend.

Depending on the amount of story time elapsed between past and present events, different casting options arise. The same actor may portray the same character in the present and in the past, or different performers may be chosen to play the same character at different stages of his life. In every case there is a particular link between actor

and character called "dramatic connector" (cf. Fauconnier, 1994 [1985]; Fauconnier & Turner, 2002: 266-267). In this connection actor and character mutually influence each other, so that,

> [i]n the blend, the person [character] sounds and moves like the actor and is where the actor is, but the actor in her performance tries to accept projections from the character portrayed, and so modifies her language, appearance, dress, attitudes, and gestures. (Fauconnier & Turner, 2002: 266)

When a single actor is cast, he may look just the same in the present and in the past (like Humphrey Bogart in *Casablanca*), but there is also the possibility of changing slightly the actor's appearance (if necessary) in order to make the past scenes more credible. This is what happens in *The Help*, for instance, where the same actress plays Skeeter as a young adult and as a teenager. In the flashback, there is a variation in the actress's dress and hairstyle in order to make her look younger (of course, the actress's interpretation of the character also contributes to this effect). The relation that is established between the actress and the character's identity is that of representation, supported by an analogy connection (the actress's features match some of the character's qualities, such as age), and both kinds of relation are compressed into uniqueness in the blend (cf. Fauconnier & Turner, 2002: 266). Thus, we see the actress and the character as a unity: the actress on screen *is* Skeeter. Similarly, in the case that the actor's appearance is not altered, the same representation link connects actor and character (e.g. Bogart and Rick in *Casablanca*), which is further compressed into uniqueness. Although in such cases the character's looks do not offer an extra cue in the time leap to the past, the flashback is understood as such because of the space builders that set up the past narrative space, the time links between present and past, and, more generally, because of the narrative context.

There is, however, a possibility that the same actor plays two different roles in the same movie. In *Grandma's Boy* (1922) Harold Lloyd plays both a young man in the present and the man's grandfather in the flashback (00:32:50-00:40:00). For both characters Harold Lloyd wears his trademark glasses, but when he plays the grandfather he also has sideburns and a soldier uniform (Figure 26,

shot (b)). These external differences, together with other cues that the movie provides (e.g. Grandma's speech before the flashback), trigger identity connections for the young man and the grandfather separately. Even though an identity connection links the actor's different appearances on screen, and thus the viewer recognizes Harold Lloyd in all of them, that uniqueness of the actor as a performer is not blended with a single character, but with two different ones. That is, a relation of representation is set up between the actor and the young man, on the one hand, and between the actor and the grandfather, on the other. Each of those relations of representation is, then, compressed into uniqueness, so Harold Lloyd *is* the young man, and he *is* also the grandfather. Thus, in spite of being played by the same actor, the two characters portrayed are not blended into one but remain separate.

a)   b)

Figure 26. Harold Lloyd in *Grandma's Boy* (1922)
plays a young man (a) and also the man's grandfather (b)

Finally, in some films it is necessary to cast different actors that will play the same character. That is the case, for example, of films that narrate both a character's childhood and his adult life, such as *Forrest Gump* (1994), *Big Fish* (2003), *Ray* (2004), *Jane Eyre* (2011), or *Saving Mr. Banks* (2013). In these and other films, an adult actor portrays the main character in the present narrative space, while a child actor plays the part when the character's childhood is shown in flashbacks. There may even be more than two performers for the

same character, as in *Big Fish*, where three different actors play Edward Bloom at different stages of his life (childhood, young and middle adulthood, and old age). In a nested-flashback sequence (00:08:25-00:13:30) (see chapter 3, sections 3.2.3 and 3.2.3 for discussions of other aspects of the sequence), Edward's son, Will, is flying to his hometown in the present (Figure 27, shot (a)), and he recalls an episode from his childhood. In the flashback, a child plays Will (shot (c)) while a young actor plays his father, Edward (shot (b)). But then Edward's storytelling triggers another flashback, one to Edward's own childhood. In this second flashback, yet another actor plays Edward (shot (d)). Identity and time relations link these three narrative spaces. The differences and similarities between Will as an adult (a) and as a child (b, c) are compressed into identity and change, which are subsequently compressed into uniqueness. Will is thus understood as a single character with unique and coherent features. And the same applies to Edward, whose unique identity emerges as a result of compressing into identity and change the analogy and disanalogy links established between adult Edward in the first flashback (b) and Edward as a child in the second one (d). Each of these two identities is then connected to a particular actor by means of a relation of representation, supported by analogy (e.g. adult Will is played by an adult actor), and this relation is compressed into uniqueness: the actor *is* Will, or Edward, at a given moment in the film. Thus, uniqueness is arrived at, on the one hand, in terms of the character's identity, and, on the other hand, with respect to the unity between actor and character portrayed. The consistency of the characters' identities across different narrative spaces thanks to the compression of vital relations is supported by the embodiment of those identities in different actors. Then, by means of the representation relationship between actor and character, compressed into uniqueness, the actor's particular features, gestures, voice, etc. become part of the character's identity, and thus, although the different actors are not connected via identity "as actors", they share that link in the character identity blend.

Identity connections across the sequence work in tandem with the time links that connect the three different narrative spaces (present, "first past", and "second past"). The change of actors reflects the

characters' change over time (the disanalogies presented by the same character in different life stages are compressed into change: e.g. the child changes into an adult), and so the casting variations serve also to convey a time interval scaled down. The time elapsed from Will's childhood ("first past") up to his adulthood in the present is scaled down and compressed into really short screen time, and the same goes for the time passed between Edward's childhood ("second past") and his middle adulthood ("first past").

a)   b)

c)   d)

Figure 27. Nested flashbacks in *Big Fish* (2003)

One last issue which has to do both with time and identity connections is that of viewpoint compression, and more specifically the availability of a character's double perspective in memory flashbacks (cf. chapter 4, sections 4.3.2 and 4.3.3). When a character in the present narrative space recalls some past events, the memories shown in the flashback are accessed from that character's present perspective, but the events are experienced from the character's viewpoint in the past space. The flashback scene thus blends those two viewpoints which come from two different narrative spaces

(present and past), and in that blend of perspectives a time relation is compressed as well (cf. Nikiforidou, 2010, 2012). On the other hand, the availability of two distinct viewpoints belonging to the same character but coming from two separate moments in time is supported by the character's unitary identity. As explained above, change and identity link the same character across different narrative spaces, and those connections are further compressed into uniqueness in the blend. That is why in *Casablanca* (1942) Rick is perceived as a unity that encompasses "Paris Rick" and "Casablanca Rick", that is, the past and present facets of his only self. But, at the same time, those facets of his identity can be accessed separately, and each of them brings with it a particular viewpoint that is also available: "Casablanca Rick" remembers Paris from a distance, while "Paris Rick" directly experiences the events. Simultaneously, the uniqueness of Rick's identity draws together all the corresponding viewpoints, and as a result the viewer watches the Paris flashback from Rick's experiential perspective but without forgetting the present Rick in Casablanca: both viewpoints are thus compressed, sustained by identity connections.

Sometimes, as explained in chapter 4 as well (section 4.3.3), a character's identity is decompressed and this operation results in turn in a compression of viewpoints. As the flashbacks in *Marnie* (1964) and *Wit* (2001) showed, two pieces of the same character's identity may be differentiated but simultaneously rendered through image and sound. Each of those facets carries with it a specific viewpoint, and both perspectives can further be accessed at the same time by means of viewpoint compression. In addition, a time relation is also compressed, since the two identity facets and viewpoints in the flashback belong to different moments in the story.

The examples discussed in this section show that time compression in flashbacks is closely related to processes of identity connection and viewpoint compression. All these cognitive operations work together and they are equally important for the successful comprehension of flashback scenes. Nevertheless, just as decompression of identity is a resource used occasionally, some

flashbacks also play with decompressions of time, and this will be explained in the following section.

5.3 DECOMPRESSION OF TIME IN FLASHBACKS

As stated above, flashbacks always involve the scaling down of the time interval between past and present events in the story. Narrative retrospections are, characteristically, leaps from a particular point in the story to a previous one, and that narrative jump links both moments and compresses the time relation between them. Moreover, some flashbacks also involve the syncopation of the past events narrated, as is the case with *Citizen Kane* (1941), *Casablanca* (1942), and *Singin' in the Rain* (1952). And then there are some instances of time decompression: in certain flashbacks, the time in the present narrative space seems to stop during the narration of the past events. This process of decompression is actually the one behind "insertion" and "dilation" devices (cf. chapter 2, section 2.1.2). Fabula time is expanded either by adding material at the level of style and syuzhet (insertion) or by stretching story time by means of screen duration (dilation, as in "slow-motion" shots, for instance) (Bordwell, 1995 [1985]: 83). Both insertion and dilation are employed in movies in general, not only in flashbacks. However, here I will specifically refer to insertion as a way of composing flashback scenes which relies on a cognitive process of time decompression. In particular, the flashback in *Casablanca* and one of the retrospection scenes in *Saving Mr. Banks* (2013) will be analyzed.

In *Casablanca*, the song "As time goes by" is played by Sam before the flashback is introduced (cf. chapter 3, section 3.3.1.3 for an in-depth analysis of the song as a narrative anchor). Then, when the flashback ends, we still hear a few notes of the same melody, and thus we infer that Sam has been playing it for the duration of the flashback. However, that means he has been performing music for about nine minutes, and that duration may be excessive for a single song. Another possible explanation is that time in the present narrative space has been decompressed, and thus it is as if it had slowed down while the past events are narrated. The duration of the scene in the present (i.e. the time that Rick spends listening to Sam

and remembering Paris) is measured by the length of the song. In turn, when this measure is set against the duration of the scene from the past, it is perceived that their times do not match: the effect achieved is that of time decompression in the present in order to embed the past scene into it.

Intradiegetic music is employed in a similar way in *Saving Mr. Banks* (2013). In the film, which narrates the production process of Disney's *Mary Poppins* (1964), some of the well-known songs from the 1964 movie are featured in different moments. Halfway through the film, the soundtrack composers (the Sherman brothers) play "Fidelity Fiduciary Bank" for P.L. Travers, and the song prompts her to remember an episode of her childhood (00:59:35-01:07:20): Travers and her family attend a county fair where her father is to give a speech and present the awards on behalf of the bank he works for, but he gets drunk and embarrasses both his family and his bosses. The theme of the song played in the present, which revolves around the investment of one's money in the bank, makes Travers recall those past events and specifically her father's shameful speech in which he tried to sing the praises of the bank.

Although the song binds the sequence together, it is not heard throughout and without interruption. The sequence goes back and forth between the present and the past in such a way that the tune is interrupted every time a leap to the past takes place. The song works alongside other cues (e.g. Travers' look into space) to mark the transitions between both narrative spaces: it fades out to signal the jumps to the past, and it fades in whenever the narrative returns to the present. Furthermore, while the original song from *Mary Poppins* is about three minutes long, in *Saving Mr. Banks* the total length of the sequence from the moment the tune begins in the present until it ends is about six minutes. Time is decompressed in the present narrative space by inserting events from the past space, and that decompression is marked by the length of the song.

Towards the end of the sequence, however, the song in the present is merged with the father's speech in the past (approximately from 01:03:30 to 01:04:20), and thus it seems as if he were singing too.

While the music composers sing in the present (Figure 28, shot (a)), there are several cuts to the father's speech in the past (b). The music is heard all the time on this occasion, and some fragments of the lyrics match the father's words. Therefore, time is compressed in this case, since the distance between past and present is scaled down to the point that both moments are rendered simultaneously. Later on in the scene, after the concurrence of past and present, the narrative stays in the past for a while, until the end of the father's speech. He eventually falls to the ground due to his drunkenness, and he starts laughing. As the laugh continues, there is a cut to Travers' sad gaze in the present (shot (c)), and thus this is another instance of time compression, since past (the father's laugh) and present (Travers' face) are simultaneously represented in the film.

a)

b)

c)
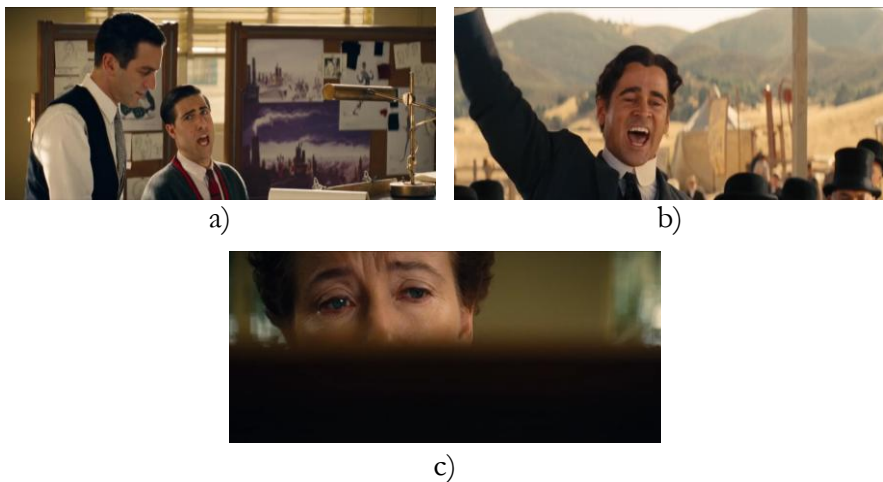
Figure 28. Instances of time compression in *Saving Mr. Banks* (2013)

Even though understanding the sequence presents no difficulty for the viewer, it does not mean that the cognitive processes the film triggers are simple. There are multiple and constant processes of compression and decompression of time relations which, although automatic for the viewer, are no less complex. On the other hand, these manipulations of time in *Saving Mr. Banks* are not gratuitous, but

serve a purpose in the narrative. Time decompression in particular is closely related to the character's experience of the events narrated: it allows for an extended narration of both the events of the past and the present, which in turn serves to show how the past has an emotional impact in Travers. Building upon Fauconnier and Turner's (2008) "blended experiential model of time", Dancygier (2012a) discusses time in narratives from the vantage point of the characters' experience of events. Referring to the relationship between reading time (or screen time in the case of film) and an event's real duration, she argues that "(...) a reader's or viewer's exposure time is allocated not on the basis of the actual duration of an event, but on the basis of its experiential/emotional importance" (Dancygier, 2012a: 39). This is precisely the case with the flashback sequence in *Saving Mr. Banks*, in which decompression of time contributes to foreground Travers' experience of the events taking place.

As soon as the Sherman brothers start playing "Fidelity Fiduciary Bank", Travers becomes pensive and turns to the window. The song progressively fades out and the flashback is introduced. But after a minute or so, the narration of the past events is interrupted and we are taken back to the present, where the music has barely moved forward. Travers is still lost in thought, absorbed in the past, and after a few seconds the narrative turns to the past once more. This dynamic continues throughout the sequence, but with some variations: at one point (around 01:02:20) we return to the present but the song being played is not heard (the musicians are seen performing in the background, but some extradiegetic music is heard instead, while Travers is still looking out the window), and later on, as explained above, past and present are merged by means of the song. The way sound is used in the first case highlights Travers' subjective experience: she is not paying attention to what is going on around her, but completely caught up in the past. This effect works alongside decompression of time in the present narrative space (i.e. the effect of time being slowed down while the past is narrated) to accentuate what Travers is going through in the present. Furthermore, these traces of subjectivity support the fragment in which past and present are merged: the constant intrusions of the past into the present (that is, the convergence of the lyrics of the song with the father's speech)

should be understood as yet another sign of Travers being wrapped up in the past.

In that very same fragment, Travers looks at some drawings of Mr. Banks, and the viewer is instantly prompted to establish an analogy connection between the character in *Mary Poppins* and Travers' father (both are parents and bankers, and the film has previously hinted at Mr. Banks being based on the father). But this connection only makes sense from Travers' perspective, which is the experiential viewpoint that the sequence has led us to assume. In this sense, decompression of time throughout the sequence is at the service of character construction: by lingering on the narration of the past events, and also on Travers' reactions in the present, the sequence develops both father and daughter as characters, and this in turn leads to understand the impact that the figure of the father has always had on Travers' life. As Dancygier (2012a: 40) points out, "time decompressions increase significance and allow us to best see the reasons why characters do what they do". In this particular sequence, time decompression contributes to emphasize the effect that the remembrance of a specific childhood event has on Travers in the present, and thus her annoyance when the song ends makes perfect sense: she sees her own father in Mr. Banks, and that is why she cannot bear to see him ridiculed by the song ("Why did you have to make him so cruel? He was not a monster!" she says, clearly connecting Mr. Banks with her father).

All in all, the song constitutes the backbone of the sequence and serves as the basis for a series of processes of time compression and decompression. Also, it is employed in ways that foreground Travers' experiential viewpoint. Ultimately, the aim of the sequence is to narrate the present accentuating Travers' perspective (which is significantly influenced by her memories), and for this purpose time in the present is slowed down at first in order to make way for the past. Then the past "invades" the present at specific moments, thus signaling the growing intensity of Travers' experience.

Although this flashback in *Saving Mr. Banks* is different in many ways from the one in *Casablanca*, they share the use of a song as a

narrative strategy to decompress time and thus highlight the main character's experience of events (and particularly to emphasize how memories of the past affect him or her in the present). In the same way that time slows down in the present to show that Travers is caught up in the past, Rick lingers on his memories of Paris to the point that time in the present runs slower. Decompression of time then functions alongside compression processes such as scaling and syncopation (the latter is clearly at work in the flashback in *Casablanca*, and also, although less conspicuously, in the past scenes in *Saving Mr. Banks*), and the result in each case is a completely understandable (although cognitively complex) sequence.

In short, the considerations presented in this chapter about time in film flashbacks lead to conclude, with Dancygier (2012a: 53), that in the viewer's mind "time is (...) not a line extending one-dimensionally from the past to the future. Rather, it is a complex blended network of experiential associations held together by the construal of motivational and causal chains".

6

THE WHOLE PICTURE

The previous chapters have discussed a number of cognitive operations at work in flashback scenes, mainly blended joint attention, viewpoint compression, time compression and identity connections. Nevertheless, although these processes have been individually described and explained, and each one of them has been illustrated through diverse flashback examples, they do all in fact operate together and in relation to each other. This last chapter aims at showing all those cognitive processes at work in unison in two flashbacks from two different films: *The Bourne Identity* (2002) and *Jane Eyre* (2011). The overall analysis of these two cases will further serve to test the proposed theoretical framework as a valid model to account for the cognitive intricacies of cinematic retrospections.

6.1 *THE BOURNE IDENTITY* (2002)

In the first film of the Bourne saga, Jason Bourne is rescued at sea by a fishing boat: he suffers from amnesia, but a number of extraordinary abilities (e.g. fighting, speaking different languages) give him clues as to what his past might be. He progressively discovers that he was a CIA agent and that he was entrusted with a mission he failed to complete: killing Wombosi, an exiled African dictator. In a scene towards the end of the movie (01:41:40-01:44:55), Bourne confronts Conklin, the head of the operation in which he was involved, who reveals to him some crucial information about that failed mission which ended with Bourne drifting in the sea and without memory. The conversation, and particularly Conklin's narration of the events that took place in Wombosi's yacht, prompts Bourne to recall details of that night for the first time, and the events are then enacted in a flashback.

Throughout the scene, the viewer's attention is directed by means of different visual and auditory mechanisms, primarily through shot/reverse shot editing (which renders visually the conversation between Bourne and Conklin; cf. Figure 29), eyeline matches across shots, and off-screen voices whenever one of the two characters speaks but the other one is shown on the screen. Thus, the camera guides the viewer and both take part in a blended joint attention scene which has the diegetic world as its object. Also, although Bourne is not part of this joint attention triangle, his attentional activity is followed in parallel by the camera and the viewer, and that is how they have access to his memories of the past.

a) b) c) d) e) f)
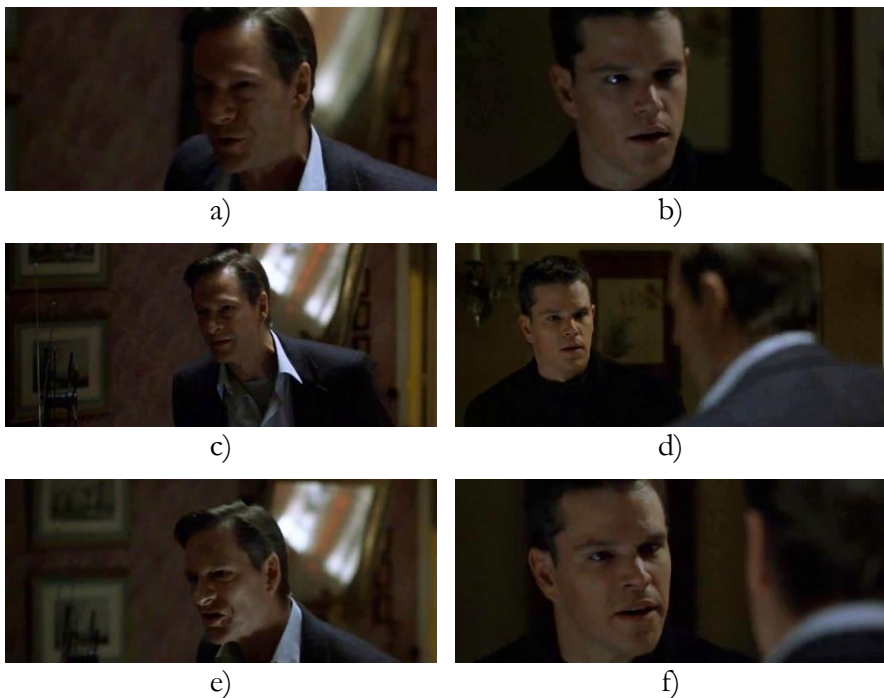
Figure 29. Instances of shot/reverse shot editing
in *The Bourne Identity* (2002)

The narrative space of the past (i.e. the flashback) is set up by two complementary space builders: a verbal one, which is Conklin's narration about how Bourne came up with a plan ("You brought John Michael Kane to life. You put together a meeting with Wombosi. You found the security company. (…) [Y]ou're the one who picked the yacht as the goddamn strike point!"), and a visual space builder, which is Bourne's gaze into space at different moments in the scene, particularly in combination with flashback shots (cf. Figure 30). A virtual eyeline match is established between Bourne's gaze and his mental (and therefore invisible) object of attention, which is later shown in the flashback, fulfilling in this way the viewer's expectations. The viewer, alongside the camera, has access to Bourne's recollections, and thus he occupies a privileged position within the joint attention triangle (not as an "ideal observer", but from the Ground mental space; cf. chapter 3, section 3.3.3), a position that is denied to Bourne's interlocutor in the scene.

a)   b)

c)   d)

Figure 30. Examples of Bourne's look into space
in *The Bourne Identity* (2002)

After the first portion of Conklin's narration, the flashback is introduced, bracketed by two shots of Bourne's wide-eyed look (Figure 31, shots (a) and (d)). However, the retrospection is

developed in three stages: this first brief immersion in the past consists only of a couple of flashes of Wombosi's yacht and of an armed man (Bourne) walking inside (shots (b) and (c) in Figure 31, respectively). After a short return to the present, the flashback continues (second stage): now it is narrated by Conklin in voice-over ("You picked the boat. You picked the day. You tracked the crew. The food, the fuel! You told us where. You told us when. You hid out on that boat five days. You were in, Jason. You were in! You were in, it was over!"), and the images of the past (very brief and unstable shots) are intertwined with Jason's look in the present, thus extending the pattern employed in the first stage. In this second fragment the past narrative space is the one in focus, but it is dependent on the present, which constitutes the Viewpoint space: this reliance is marked through particular cinematic devices, such as Conklin's voice-over, echoed at times, and Bourne's look, which belong to the present, and also through the unstable and flashing images that depict the past events as pertaining to the memories that Bourne is recovering.

a)   b)

c)   d)
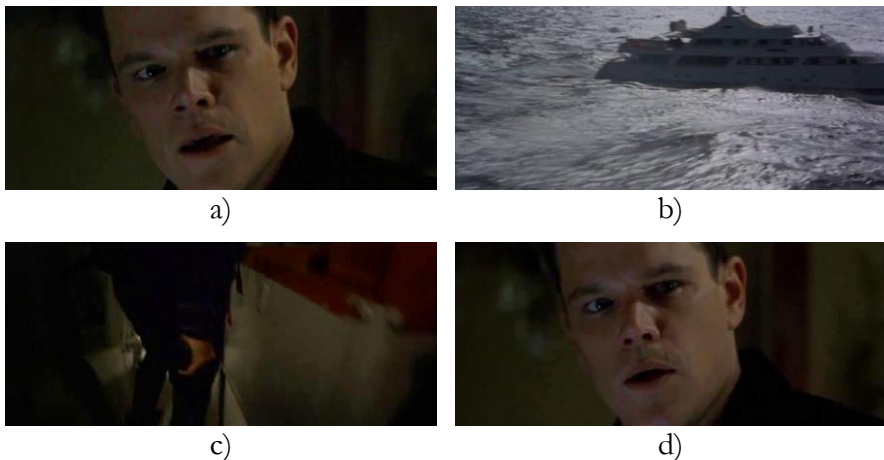
Figure 31. First flashes of the past in *The Bourne Identity* (2002)

Finally, in the third and last stage the flashback becomes visually more stable for a while, and finally shows Bourne's face in the past

space, now ready to kill Wombosi but stopping at the sight of his children. The flashback becomes slightly independent from the present space for some time, although the effect of flashing images is still used in certain moments in order to convey Bourne's struggle to remember. Ultimately, the visual (unstable and subjective) style of stage two is employed again at the end of the flashback in order to depict Bourne's escape from the yacht.

With regard to viewpoint, the flashback scene compresses two different perspectives coming from the two narrative spaces involved: the present space contributes the distance from which the past is looked at, and the past space gives access to Bourne's direct experience of the failed mission. However, a closer look at the scene's second stage reveals that there are actually two distinct viewpoints coming from the present narrative space: Conklin's and Bourne's. Conklin's voice-over narrates Bourne's strategic steps regarding his assignment, while the intermittent close-ups of Bourne keep the flashing images of the past tied to his recalling effort in the present. Thus, the flashback compresses three diverse perspectives: Conklin and Bourne's present perspectives, and also Bourne's up-close experience of the events at Wombosi's boat. Furthermore, the subjective shots used in the flashback reflect Bourne's movements and his optical perspective (in fact, Bourne's face is not seen in the flashback's second fragment), thus underlining the protagonist's experience and promoting the viewer's alignment with him. An identity connection supports as well the availability of Bourne's double viewpoint: even though Bourne's face remains hidden for the first part of the flashback, the viewer knows that the armed man is him because Conklin refers to Bourne in the present ("*You* picked the boat. *You* picked the day. *You* tracked the crew. (…) *You* told us where. *You* told us when. *You* hid out on that boat five days. *You* were in, Jason"), and thus the man performing those actions in the flashback must be Bourne. This inference is later confirmed when the protagonist's face is finally seen in the retrospection scene. The uniqueness of Bourne's identity contributes to the compression of two different viewpoints which belong to two diverse facets of that same identity in two separated narrative spaces.

Lastly, the time relations that link both narrative spaces are also compressed at the level of the story-blend. On the one hand, the narrative leap from the present to the past narrative space compresses through scaling the story time elapsed between the past events of Wombosi's boat and the present moment of revelation. This leap is successfully rendered by means of space builders and technical devices that set up the past narrative space and smooth the transition between both spaces. Nevertheless, time compression is not limited to the flashback transition, but is also a cognitive operation at play in the flashback itself: whenever the present and the past overlap because of the combination of images of the past with Conklin's voice-over coming from the present, a process of time compression through scaling is triggered as well. Moreover, the flashback's visual rendering of events involves time compression through syncopation, for it only shows the most significant moments of Bourne's activity in Wombosi's yacht, even with a visual "staccato" style.

As the global analysis of this flashback shows, the varied conceptual integration processes which have been discussed throughout this dissertation do not work independently from each other. Although it is necessary to break them apart for the sake of analysis, they actually function in unison: they are mixed together, interlaced with each other. Ultimately, it is the simultaneous working of all these mental operations, prompted by a series of cinematic cues, what makes a given flashback scene intelligible.

6.2 *JANE EYRE* (2011)

The latest film adaptation of Charlotte Brontë's novel breaks the book's sequential narration of events and resorts to a narrative structured in flashbacks to tell Jane Eyre's story. The film begins *in medias res*, when Jane has just run away from Thornfield Hall and, wandering about the moors, arrives at the Rivers' house. St. John Rivers and his sisters take her in, and inquire about her identity. The scene triggers the first flashback in the film, which narrates Jane's childhood since she is sent to Lowood School by her aunt. From then on, past and present are interweaved: Jane's education at Lowood and her later finding a position as a governess at Thornfield are told in

flashbacks, but the narrative briefly goes back to the present from time to time, where Jane tries to make a fresh start and accepts a job offer from St. John Rivers. Ultimately, the flashback thread narrates Jane's stay at Thornfield and her relationship with Rochester, and for a rather long stretch of time (more than one hour of film time) the narration does not go back to the present. This flashback actually goes up to the moment where the film started: that of Jane fleeing Thornfield. The narrative then returns to the present, this time definitively, and the story reaches its resolution after Jane leaves the Rivers' and reunites with Rochester.

The flashback selected to be analyzed here is the first one in the film (00:03:55-00:12:40), which is particularly interesting because it is charged with activating the past narrative space for the first time. When St. John Rivers finds Jane at his doorstep, in the pouring rain, he brings her into the house, where his two sisters take care of her. Jane is not feeling well, she is even a bit delirious, and the scene depicts her subjective viewpoint by means of visual and auditory resources such as camera movements, changes of focus and distorted voices. The viewer's attention is guided by the camera through visual and auditory cues like shot/reverse shot editing (which renders Jane's interaction with her hosts; see Figure 32), eyeline matches, or voice-overs, and thus a blended joint attention triangle is established between camera and viewer, who attend together to the diegetic world. Jane's attention, however, is not joint but parallel: she is not aware of the viewer and the camera's presence, who follow her attentional behavior in an eavesdropping manner (and even experience the events from Jane's viewpoint, to which the altered focus and the distorted voices contribute). Furthermore, joint attention is broken in the diegesis as St. John and his sisters ask Jane about who she is ("Ask her her name" – "What's your name?"), but she does not answer the question. Indeed, she does not interact with her interlocutors in the present, but with her own past: thus, the answer to the question ("Jane Eyre") comes from a voice-over, that of Jane's cousin, which belongs to a past narrative space. Crucially, the camera and the viewer, jointly attending but in parallel to Jane, have access to this information, and hence they know more than Jane's real interlocutors. This is made manifest slightly later in the

scene, when one of the Rivers sisters insists and says "Your name": the viewer already knows the answer, but Jane's hosts do not yet. Moreover, back in the present after Jane's childhood flashback, the protagonist says "My name is Jane Elliott" and, since the viewer knows this to be false, he is again in possession of more information than Jane's interlocutors. However, as it was the case in *The Bourne Identity*, this fact does not make the viewer an "ideal observer" (cf. chapter 3, section 3.3.3), but rather manifests his privileged position in the Ground mental space within the blended joint attention triangle.

Figure 32. Instances of shot/reverse shot editing in *Jane Eyre* (2011)

The past gets into the present for the first time through Jane's cousin's voice-over when he says "Jane Eyre". This voice directs the viewer's attention towards a still unknown narrative space; it announces a new space which will be developed as the narrative goes on. In this sense, this first utterance that belongs to the past works partially as a space builder: it does indeed "open the door" to a new narrative space, but it is also in need of other elements in order for that space to be comprehended as past. The interaction between Jane and her hosts continues ("Tell us how we may help you" – "Your name"), and for a second time the voice-over is heard: "Where are you?". Jane mutters "I must hide" (shot (a) in Figure 33), and images of the past are briefly shown for the first time: a girl is seen from the back, running down a hallway (b). After returning to the present for a few seconds, the narrative goes back again to the past, this time to remain in it for a while in order to show specific episodes of Jane's childhood. The interference of the past in the present by means of the cousin's voice-over (first with "Jane Eyre" and later with "Where are you?") had announced a different narrative space, which could be either one belonging to the past in the story or one pertaining to Jane's imagination. Then, Jane's reaction ("I must hide") followed by the image of a girl running indicates that she is looking for a hideout. Thus, this image is understood in connection with Jane's utterance, which in a way functions as a space builder: the interaction between the voice-over and Jane ("Where are you?" – "I must hide") sets up a hide-and-seek cognitive frame, one with a menacing hint, that will be developed later in the flashback. Shortly after, once we are definitively immersed in the past, we see Jane's cousin (John Reed) looking for little Jane as he says "Where are you, rat?". The viewer then links this utterance to the previous one in the present, and hence identifies John Reed as the character behind that voice. The flashback is thus comprehended as a narration of past events because of diverse elements that contribute to construct the narrative space of the past: it is activated for the first time by the voice-over that interferes in the present, as well as by Jane's interaction with it in the same space, and then it is progressively developed once the flashback is fully in motion. Different gaps are filled by means of narrative context, such as who is seeking Jane and why, and the reasons for her being scared and trying to hide. Ultimately, the flashback also reveals crucial events

of Jane's childhood (e.g. her education at Lowood) which will help the viewer comprehend other happenings in the film.

Another remarkable aspect of the scene regarding the hiding cognitive frame is the double meaning with which the phrase "I must hide" may be read. When the flashback closes, Jane tells St. John: "I mustn't ever be found". This utterance parallels the first one, but it is meaningful in the present narrative space, not in the past. That is: Jane does not want to be found in her present situation, and not only in her childhood memories, when she was bullied by her cousin. The phrase invokes a hiding cognitive frame as well, but it is spoken from the perspective of the present narrative space. In light of this new utterance and its corresponding viewpoint, the viewer reconsiders Jane's reaction before the flashback ("I must hide") (cf. Tobin, 2017), and now understands it with a double meaning: Jane must hide from her cousin in the past space, but also needs to conceal herself in her present situation (in fact, she does not reveal her true identity and calls herself "Jane Elliott"). Thus, "I must hide" is now comprehended from two different viewpoints (those provided by the present and the past narrative spaces) simultaneously.

a)   b)

Figure 33. First visual flashback in *Jane Eyre* (2011)

A double viewpoint regarding Jane is also available in the flashback: the retrospection scene gives direct access to Jane's childhood experiences (her willingness to hide, her fear, her suffering, etc.), but at the same time those events are observed from the distance of the present narrative space. The compression of these two

perspectives is sustained by the identity connection established between Jane as a young adult in the present and Jane as a child in the past: thus, while experiencing Jane's childhood hardships up-close, the viewer is aware of that girl being an adult in the present narrative space, and the identity connection between both, compressed into uniqueness, helps bringing together (compressing) two different viewpoints. Furthermore, this double viewpoint is reinforced at the end of the flashback, when images of Jane at Lowood School are combined with adult Jane's speech in voice-over, talking to St. John Rivers ("*My name is Jane Elliott*" – "Who can we send for to help you" – "*No one*"): the experience of the past is visually vivid, but the distance marked by the present is underlined by Jane's words from that narrative space.

Finally, the time relations that exist between past and present narrative spaces are compressed in the scene through scaling, thus contributing to its intelligibility. First, the story time that elapses between Jane's childhood and her arrival at the Rivers' house is scaled down in the narrative and compressed into the time leap that links present and past. But a time relation is compressed as well whenever past and present overlap through the combination of image and sound. This happens both at the beginning and at the end of the flashback scene: before the retrospection is fully introduced, the past gets into the present in the form of John Reed's voice-over, and even in the leap between present and past the voices of the Rivers are still slightly heard in voice-over when the flashback starts, thus smoothing the transition from one narrative space to the other. Also, when the flashback is reaching its end the images of the past are accompanied by Jane's and St. John's voice-over from the present, as mentioned above: this time, in contrast with the beginning of the scene, it is the present that gets into the past. Moreover, later on, back in the present, images of Jane getting up and dressing are shown as Jane's voice-over continues ("I mustn't ever be found") and, also in voice-over, St. John is heard saying grace before lunch: those two utterances, although coming from the present narrative space, take place at a later time than the images show, and thus this combination of image and sound is another instance of time compression.

All in all, as illustrated through the analysis of these two scenes, a variety of cognitive processes is at work in the activity of watching and successfully comprehending movie flashbacks. All these mental operations are equally necessary, and they are all interweaved in the dynamic process of meaning construction intrinsic to film watching. Hence, as a fruit of combining the analytic tools employed along the dissertation, I propose a model that accounts for the cognitive functioning of film flashbacks: a cognitive model of flashback comprehension. It fundamentally consists of the described mechanisms of blended joint attention, viewpoint compression, time compression, and identity connections, which together make up the basic cognitive foundation of flashback construction in film. Furthermore, this shared cognitive basis does not translate into rigidity and lack of creativity. On the contrary, it is precisely this common ground what allows for artistic variations in flashbacks. As long as a given retrospection scene is arranged in order to trigger a number of basic cognitive operations, there is enough freedom for creativity without the main meaning of the construction (i.e. a leap back in time) being affected. Indeed, it could be argued that the poetic dimension of every flashback is built upon this fundamental cognitive basis.

7

CONCLUSIONS

The main objective of this study has been to analyze and explain why and how movie flashbacks are intelligible to film viewers. Appropriate answers were sought along the lines of cognitive accounts of film narratives and of spectators' mental activities, in the spirit of research developed in the Cognitive Film Theory program. More specifically, Conceptual Integration/Blending Theory provided what seemed like a suitable framework for the analysis of the cognitive functioning of flashbacks. On the one hand, in opposition to the structuralist-semiotic approaches to cinema that consider it a language-like system made of codes that viewers must learn, the naturalistic cognitive account of film stands up for the centrality of general cognitive and perceptual capacities in our comprehension of movies. On the other hand, Blending Theory explains the intricacies of conceptual integration, a general mental operation which permeates our thinking and acting. Thus, both theoretical frameworks seemed like an excellent start for a cognitive analysis of flashbacks.

First, it has been shown how the perceptual and cognitive mechanisms involved in the viewer's understanding of film flashbacks have a natural basis. Human beings' ability for gaze following and joint attention has been proved essential for a successful navigation of cinematic narratives, and particularly of retrospection scenes. As exposed in chapter three, the blended joint attention triangle established between camera and viewer (which is sometimes joined by a character as well), who attend together to the events being narrated, is built upon the viewer's natural capacity for joint attention in the real world. This particular natural behavior is the one that accounts for and enables the viewer's attention being guided in a film, and thus it is also a fundamental ingredient in directing the spectator from the present to the past narrative space in a flashback. On the other hand, our natural tendency to follow other people's gazes comes into play

whenever a character stares at something in particular, and thus focuses his attention on it. In these instances, the viewer follows the character's gaze and attends in parallel with him to the object in question (or, conversely, attention may be joint if the character is aware of the spectator's presence). Point-of-view editing, as discussed in chapters three and four, relies heavily on this natural ability for gaze following, and is in turn an editing pattern often found in the introduction of memory flashbacks. Both gaze following and joint attention behaviors have thus been shown to be indispensable in the process of making sense of film flashbacks. Furthermore, the analysis of retrospection scenes within these parameters has also confirmed that cinematic cues work in order to elicit particular responses in the viewer's mind. That is, our natural perceptual, cognitive and communicative capacities "inspire" filmic narrative devices and conventions. Indeed, different authors have extensively argued in favor of a "naturalistic" theory of film (e.g. Anderson, 1996; Carroll, 2003: 10-58; Bordwell, 2010), and this cognitive analysis of film flashbacks both relies on and reinforces their arguments.

Second, the Conceptual Integration framework has proven to be a fruitful tool to dissect the cognitive workings of movie flashbacks. The multimodal cues employed in flashback scenes do not explicitly contain in themselves the variety of meanings that a given flashback conveys. Those cues (e.g. a narrating voice, a character's look into space, an object working as a narrative anchor, etc.) are prompts for mental processes. Thus, the meaning of a given flashback emerges in the viewer's mind as a result of a series of mental operations triggered by cinematic cues. But, as Fauconnier (2014) points out,

> we are not conscious of these processes. What we are conscious of, to a high degree, is language [or other kind of] form on one hand, and experiencing "meaning" on the other. (…) [A]s soon as we have form, we also have meaning, with no awareness of the intervening cognition. (Fauconnier, 2014: 230)

In this sense, as explained in chapter three, the abovementioned blended joint attention scene, essential for the comprehension of movie flashbacks, is not viable just through our ability for joint attention: this natural behavior that takes place at a local level is one

more (although essential) ingredient in a blended mental space that allows for joint attention at non-local spheres.

More specifically, Dancygier's (2012b) conceptual integration account of literary narratives has been applied to film narration with satisfactory results. The analysis of flashbacks following Dancygier's model has shown that conceptual blending lies at the core of the intelligibility of retrospection scenes in film: first, viewpoint compression (chapter four) has appeared as a fundamental cognitive operation that accounts for a variety of phenomena, from the emergence of a unifying perspective that orchestrates the whole narrative (which allows to assert the nonexistence of a cinematic narrator) to the availability of a character's double perspective in a flashback. Second, and most importantly, the mentioned conceptual integration model has served to explain how the diverse components of a filmic narrative, organized around a number of narrative spaces, ultimately make sense at the level of the story-blend. Particularly, flashbacks are understandable due to processes and mechanisms such as space builders, which set up the past narrative space (chapter three), narrative anchors that both activate the past space and link present and past narrative spaces (chapter three), cross-space mappings between those narrative spaces, and, among others, the multiple vital relations established between elements in both spaces, which are further compressed and decompressed in the blend (fundamentally, as chapter five explained, flashbacks rely on compressions and decompressions of time, as well as on identity connections). Ultimately, all the narrative spaces involved in a film's narration, including those taking part in flashback constructions, are interconnected in the story-blend, where the story itself emerges. It is then in this higher-level blend where flashbacks make sense to the film spectator: the retrospective meaning of those scenes does not reside in the cinematic cues employed, but emerges in the viewer's mind as a result of various cognitive processes prompted by those cues.

Finally, in tune with what different authors have already stated about film in general (e.g. Messaris, 1994; Anderson, 1996; Carroll, 1996b: 78-93; Carroll, 2003: 10-58), it has been demonstrated that

flashbacks are not intelligible to viewers because they have learned how to comprehend film language as a result of watching many movies. Rather, flashbacks are generally easily understood by spectators because they rely upon natural perceptual and cognitive abilities, as summarized above. Moreover, as exposed in chapter three, "unexplained", uncued transitions are understood by virtue of contextual information, and not because the viewer has learned how to read cinematic codes (cf. Messaris, 1994). Thus, the evolution of flashbacks throughout film history (the continuous innovations on the basis of an established basic structure) is not driven by a parallel progress of viewer's learning of cinematic "language". Actually, as discussed in chapter two, neither the history of film nor the history of flashbacks is that of a linear evolution from plain and rigid techniques in the early years to creative outcomes in more recent cinema. On the contrary, film history is characterized by a constant combination of tradition and novelty (c.f., for instance, Turim, 1989; Bordwell, 2017).

This study on the comprehension of movie flashbacks also has several implications at different levels. In an immediate stage, it proposes a specific cognitive model of flashback comprehension which, in a nutshell, describes processes of blended joint attention, viewpoint and time compression, and identity connections (chapter six). This model is both a tool to analyze any film flashback (and thus assess its technical construction and cognitive functioning), and a suitable reference for further research on cognition regarding other cinematic devices (e.g. film transitions). Indeed, the results of this work make a small contribution to the complex issue of the intelligibility of films in a broad sense. But, furthermore, the analysis of flashbacks proposed here reveals some of the intricacies of the ways human beings (or at least film viewers) think and communicate: ways that seem simple and obvious, since only the tip of the iceberg is consciously perceived, but which are in fact far from simple beneath the surface. Thus, in the near future, the study of cinema within a cognitivist paradigm could be a fruitful path to keep examining the properties of human beings' way of thinking.

Certainly, there are many issues related to the cognitive dimension of films and flashbacks which this study does not consider, like the

way emotions operate in our comprehension of cinematic narratives, for instance. This and other topics are matters for future research, which can develop in different directions. Recently, some studies have been conducted which apply the framework of embodiment to the analysis of cinema (e.g. Coëgnarts & Kravanja, 2015). This seems like a promising research path within the cognitive approach to film, and one which would also take into account the role of other senses apart from sight and hearing (i.e. smell, taste, touch) in the viewer's process of understanding movies (cf. for instance, Zacks, 2013). Interdisciplinary ways open up as well in relation both to different narrative mediums and to multimodal communication: the viewer's attention being guided in film could be compared, for example, to the verbal mechanisms employed in oral poetry to direct and shift the listener's focus of attention (e.g. De Kreij, 2016), and the interplay of multiple viewpoints in a given cinematic narrative could be contrasted with similar processes accompanying co-speech gesture or multimodal instances of communication, such as advertising (cf. Dancygier & Vandelanotte, 2017; Vandelanotte & Dancygier, 2017). Furthermore, these multidisciplinary paths could involve analyses of broader sets of data, in the spirit of several international research consortia[49]. A research topic on cognition and film that shows potential is that of cinematic transitions: it would build upon, but broaden at the same time, the present work on movie flashbacks, and it would welcome an embodied and interdisciplinary approach.

Another issue of great interest for future inquiry and which also involves diverse disciplines is that of "visual literacy". As discussed above, films do not work with codes that spectators must learn in order to find movies intelligible. However, Messaris (1994) argues as well that visual literacy is necessary (in film and in other visual media) in order to develop *critical viewing*, since this kind of literacy "gives the viewer a foundation for a heightened conscious appreciation of artistry (…) [and] it is a prerequisite for the ability to see through the manipulative uses and ideological implications of visual images" (Messaris, 1994: 165). This critical eye does not replace the basic comprehension processes which ride upon our natural perceptual and

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[49]Among others, CLARIN (https://www.clarin.eu), the Red Hen Lab (http://redhenlab.org), or FilmColors (https://filmcolors.org).

cognitive capacities: rather, it relies on them to go one step further. The cognitive dimensions of visual literacy are thus a topic which should still receive more attention, among other things because of the implications it may have in the field of education.

All in all, the cognitive and multimodal analysis of flashbacks carried out in this work has confirmed that understanding film narratives is an "unlearned" ability. What makes viewers successfully comprehend retrospections in movies is the set of natural capacities and general mental operations that flashback techniques put to work. Those cues trigger a number of conceptual integration processes which are responsible for the dynamic construction of a flashback's meaning: the narrative spaces involved are set up and interconnected, and after a series of blending operations the flashback finds its place in the emergent story. Again, these intricate processes go unnoticed by the viewer, who straight away and effortlessly grasps the meaning of the scene. Maybe this is one of the secrets behind the magic of the movies.

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Annie Hall (1977). Woody Allen (Director). USA: Jack Rollins & Charles H. Joffe Productions.

Arrival (2016). Denis Villeneuve (Director). USA: Paramount Pictures/Lava Bear Films/FilmNation Entertainment/21 Laps Entertainment.

Atonement (2007). Joe Wright (Director). UK/France/USA: Working Title Films/Universal Pictures/StudioCanal/Relativity Media.

Begin Again (2013). John Carney (Director). USA: Exclusive Media Group/Sycamore Pictures/Apatow Productions.

Big Fish (2003). Tim Burton (Director). USA: Columbia Pictures Corporation/Jinks-Cohen Company/The Zanuck Company.

Casablanca (1942). Michael Curtiz (Director). USA: Warner Bros. Pictures.

Citizen Kane (1941). Orson Welles (Director). USA: RKO Radio Pictures/Mercury Productions.

Dark Passage (1947). Delmer Daves (Director). USA: Warner Bros. Pictures.

Double Indemnity (1944). Billy Wilder (Director). USA: Paramount Pictures.

Ever After (1998). Andy Tennant (Director). USA: Twentieth Century Fox.

Forrest Gump (1994). Robert Zemeckis (Director). USA: Paramount Pictures.

Grandma's Boy (1922). Fred Newmeyer (Director). USA: Hal Roach Studios.

Hacksaw Ridge (2016). Mel Gibson (Director). USA/Australia: Cross Creek Pictures/Demarest Films/Pandemonium Films/Permut Presentations/Vendian Entertainment.

Hiroshima, Mon Amour (1959). Alain Resnais (Director). France/Japan: Argos Films/Como Films/Daiei Studios/Pathé Entertainment.

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Lights of New York (1928). Bryan Foy (Director). USA: Warner Bros. Pictures.

Manchester by the Sea (2016). Kenneth Lonergan (Director). USA: Amazon Studios/K Period Media/ Pearl Street Films/B Story.

Marnie (1964). Alfred Hitchcock (Director). USA: Universal Pictures.

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Mildred Pierce (1945). Michael Curtiz (Director). USA: Warner Bros. Pictures.

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Rebecca (1940). Alfred Hitchcock (Director). USA: Selznick International Pictures.

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Strangers on a Train (1951). Alfred Hitchcock (Director). USA: Warner Bros. Pictures.

Sunrise: A Song of Two Humans (1927). F.W. Murnau (Director). USA: Fox Film Corporation.

Sunset Blvd. (1950). Billy Wilder (Director). USA: Paramount Pictures.

The Barefoot Contessa (1954). Joseph L. Mankiewicz (Director). USA/Italy: Figaro/Transoceanic Film.

The Birth of a Nation (1915). D.W. Griffith (Director). USA: David W. Griffith Corporation.

The Bourne Identity (2002). Doug Liman (Director). USA/Germany: Universal Pictures/Kennedy-Marshall/Hypnotic.

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The Bourne Ultimatum (2007). Paul Greengrass (Director). USA/Germany: Universal Pictures/Kennedy-Marshall/Ludlum Entertainment/MP BETA Productions.

The Godfather: Part II (1974). Francis Ford Coppola (Director). USA: Paramount Pictures/The Coppola Company.

The Help (2011). Tate Taylor (Director). USA/India/United Arab Emirates: DreamWorks Pictures/Reliance Entertainment/Participant Media/Imagenation Abu Dhabi/1492 Pictures/Harbinger Pictures.

The Jazz Singer (1927). Alan Crosland (Director). USA: Warner Bros. Pictures.

The Locket (1946). John Brahm (Director). USA: RKO Radio Pictures.

The Man Who Shot Liberty Valance (1962). John Ford (Director). USA: Paramount Pictures.

The Marrying Kind (1952). George Cukor (Director). USA: Columbia Pictures Corporation.

The Miracle Worker (1962). Arthur Penn (Director). USA: Playfilms Productions.

The Passer-by (1912). Oscar Apfel (Director). USA: Edison Company.

The Princess Bride (1987). Rob Reiner (Director). USA: Act III Communications/Buttercup Films Ltd./The Princess Bride Ltd.

The Shawshank Redemption (1994). Frank Darabont (Director). USA: Castle Rock Entertainment.

The Social Network (2010). David Fincher (Director). USA: Columbia Pictures Corporation/Relativity Media/Scott Rudin Productions/ Michael De Luca Productions/Trigger Street Productions.

The Usual Suspects (1995). Bryan Singer (Director). USA/Germany: PolyGram Filmed Entertainment/Spelling Films International/ Blue Parrot/Bad Hat Harry.

Vertigo (1958). Alfred Hitchcock (Director). USA: Paramount Pictures.

Wit (2001). Mike Nichols (Director). USA/UK: HBO Films/Avenue Pictures.

TABLE OF FLASHBACKS[50]

Title	Film time
A Letter to Three Wives (1949)	1. RITA – 00:33:30-00:59:20 2. LORA MAE – 01:01:00-01:28:50
All About Eve (1950)	00:07:25-00:08:15
Annie Hall (1977)	00:04:05-00:05:25
Arrival (2016)	00:01:20-00:04:10
Atonement (2007)	00:06:25-00:07:55 REPLAY – 00:09:35-00:13:00
Begin Again (2013)	00:27:45-00:28:45
Big Fish (2003)	00:08:25-00:13:30
Casablanca **(**1942**)**	00:35:30-00:46:20
Citizen Kane (1941)	00:49:25-00:54:40
Double Indemnity (1944)	00:06:45-00:07:15
Forrest Gump (1994)	00:04:00-00:04:55
Grandma's Boy (1922)	00:32:50-00:40:00
Hacksaw Ridge (2016)	00:03:00-00:03:10

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[50] The following table lists those flashbacks either analyzed in detail in the dissertation or mentioned because their traits exemplify specific elements being discussed. Their running time in each film is indicated.

Hiroshima Mon Amour (1959)	00:19:00-00:19:35
Jane Eyre (2011)	00:03:55-00:12:40
Manchester by the Sea (2016)	00:16:20-00:22:55
Marnie (1964)	01:54:15-01:59:00
Mildred Pierce (1945)	00:01:40-00:02:20 REPLAY – 01:45:20-01:49:45
Ordinary People (1980)	1. LAUGH – 00:44:05-00:44:55 2. UNCUED – 01:36:10-01:38:45
Ray (2004)	00:21:00-00:23:10
Saving Mr. Banks (2013)	1. INTRO. – 00:00:50-00:01:40 2. BANK SONG – 00:59:35-01:07:20
Singin' in the Rain (1952)	00:04:15-00:11:05
Spellbound (1945)	01:38:20-01:38:50
Sunrise: A Song of Two Humans (1927)	00:09:10-00:10:30
Sunset Blvd. (1950)	00:01:25-00:03:20
The Birth of a Nation (1915)	01:48:48-01:50:22
The Godfather: Part II (1974)	00:40:00-00:41:55
The Help (2011)	00:23:10-00:26:00
The Locket (1946)	00:06:45-00:07:05

The Man Who Shot Liberty Valance (1962)	01:30:50-01:35:20 REPLAY – 01:55:40-01:59:00
The Miracle Worker (1962)	00:51:15-00:52:25
The Passer-by (1912)	00:02:40-00:15:30
The Shawshank Redemption (1994)	01:48:15-01:54:30 REPLAY – 01:54:35-02:01:50
The Usual Suspects (1995)	01:39:15-01:42:35
Vertigo (1958)	01:13:20-01:15:40 REPLAY – 01:37:35-01:38:30
Wit (2001)	00:34:10-00:38:10

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