

# THE KINEIKONIC MODE: TOWARDS A MULTIMODAL APPROACH TO MOVING IMAGE MEDIA

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Multimodality theory can offer new ways to think about the combination of sign-systems to be found in such cultural forms as narrative film, television, animation, moving image art installations and machinima. Why we might need such a theory is a question for specialists in Film Studies, which will be briefly considered in the conclusion. Meanwhile, this chapter is aimed mostly at those with a more general interest in analysing the moving image, particularly in relation to other media and other art-forms, and in relation to conceptions of literacy which move beyond print and language. I will examine two examples: one from a narrative film produced in 1948, and one from a machinima film made by 11 year-olds in 2013.

## MULTIMODALITY AND THE MOVING IMAGE: A BRIEF HISTORY

The moving image is not, of course, newly multimodal. The phenomenon of multimodality has been there from the beginning, and the earliest theorists and practitioners of moving image art discussed it and theorised it, though they did not use the word multimodality. The montage theory of Eisenstein, for example, theorised the relationships between filming, editing, dramatic movement, music and sound (1968).

The early adaptation of theatre into film is often seen as a naive use of the fixed camera in deference to the theatrical frame, a proxy for the eye of the audience member in the centre of the stalls. This has been disputed: Brewster and Jacobs point out that filmed theatre was a more sophisticated affair, and that much nineteenth century theatre could be seen as 'cinema manqué' in its play on point of view (1998: 6). In any case, theatre as a complex of modes was embedded within cinema from the beginning. The result is an art form which is multimodal in the sense of an accretion of more or less settled cultural forms, each new instance containing echoes (to use an auditory metaphor) or layers (to use a spatial one) of earlier moments. Theatre was already multimodal: its signifying systems integrate spoken language, dramatised action, gesture and facial expression, lighting, symbolic objects, representations of architecture. These modes can also be seen as orchestrated by two kinds of *framing* device, one spatial, the other temporal. The spatial device is the stage, in its many forms, and especially that facet which opens towards the audience, realised in classical theatre as the proscenium arch, and culturally cognate with all kinds of viewing aperture which frame the viewed object on the one hand, and the viewer's gaze on the other. The temporal device is the system

of breaks, classically scenes and acts, which indicate shifts in time and location, theme, narrative component, and so on. The framing structures of dramatic scripts contain finer framing structures: the turntaking of dramatic dialogue; the shifts of time and place indicated in stage directions; the framing of modes of address such as the soliloquy and aside.

The idea of *frame* here, while it has common-sense meanings which are obviously appropriate to the discussion of the moving image, is also an important multimodal principle which operates across all semiotic modes. Van Leeuwen (2005) proposes principles governing the function of frames, such as the segmentation and separating functions frames carry out, and the degrees of permeability which may apply. In film, the cinematic frame might dissolve, for example, in a film projected on a building; the temporal frame of a filmic sequence might be blurred by a dissolve transition; a spatial frame may be overlaid in a superimposed image.

The young medium of film adopted and adapted the modes of theatre, then: both what I will call *contributory modes* (movement, lighting, costume, objects, sets and so on), and what I will call *orchestrating modes* (the overarching framing systems in space and time). In terms of the orchestrating modes, the camera provided spatial framing, as had the proscenium arch; but transformed the fixed location of the audience, allowing proximity and angle to the enacted events to become mobile, rather than fixed points in the auditorium. Meanwhile, the practice of editing – cutting and rejoining sections of film – also replicated some aspects of theatrical scene and act breaks, indicating temporal and locational shifts; but added new ones. Camera and editing combined were able, for example, to introduce mobile point of view in a dramatised conversation, so that the audience could see one speaker from the point of view of the other, and then reverse this view with the change of speaker. This shot-reverse-shot structure has become so normalised in film and television that we barely notice it happening. Indeed, the children whose film is analysed later in this chapter, though they see this structure every day, find it difficult to construct it in their own work, having never explicitly considered its grammatical form or its social function.

However, the early history of film also contains the very different work of Georges Méliès, who used the properties of filming and editing to produce fantastic illusions, perhaps the best-known of which are contained in *Le Voyage dans la Lune* (1902). This was almost the opposite of the recording of theatre: rather, the camera was used to disrupt the continuity of time and space, playing with the appearance and disappearance of objects and characters, and the layering of visual images upon each other to produce fantasy constructs. While these films were organised as fantastic dramas in certain ways, they also drew on practices in modern art: the layering of images in collage, the subversive juxtaposition of apparently unrelated images practised by surrealism, the challenge to perspectival naturalism in representations of the physical world which had become the norm of art since the Renaissance. Here, then, multimodality is a question of how filming and editing

frame the materials and signifying systems of the visual arts, both spatially and temporally. If the incorporation of the theatrical within the cinematic frame can be seen as the start of a history leading to today's narrative cinema, then Méliès' work can be seen as the ancestor of the compositing work of the digital age: the layering of images for which Goffman's notion of laminated frames is peculiarly apt (1974). The descendants of such work might be seen as the 'poetry' of the moving image: avant-garde art-house cinema; hyperreal or anti-naturalistic animation; video installations in galleries; the popular lyrical moving image forms of music video; the quotidian aesthetic of television advertising; the poetic punctuation of television interstitial adverts; the mash-up formats of online video culture.

As these early histories progressed, the puzzle of fragmentation created by the mobile camera and the practice of editing raised profound questions about how film might represent the world. Should it aspire to naturalistic representations of an apparently continuous experience of space and time its viewers would recognise and be reassured by? Or should it seek to disrupt such expectations, and challenge our conventional perceptions of the world? This became a question of cultural politics, in which, simply speaking, the continuity editing of Hollywood was seen as an attempt to normalise the view of the world favoured by dominant groups in society; while the montage principle for which the Soviet film-maker Sergei Eisenstein is best-known challenged such ideologies by radical, often violent juxtapositions of images (Eisenstein, 1969). However, from our viewpoint, Eisenstein's theory of montage – that two images in juxtaposition produce a third meaning – is a multimodal theory. The visual modes in question – visual design and the forms of dramatic movement integrated with them – are orchestrated by the filming and editing processes to produce meaning. Eisenstein extended his principle to consider not only the cinematic frame, but, amongst other things, the temporal rhythms of editing and the succession of facial expressions and gestures of the actor.

He also considered the relation of image and sound; and the arrival of sound can be seen as a critical multimodal moment in the history of film. The specificity of this relation can be seen in Eisenstein's notion of vertical montage, the juxtaposition of image and soundtrack which he represents diagrammatically, and which is still the core visual trope of today's digital editing timelines. More generally, of course, sound included a wide range of modes, most notably the human voice, music, and the soundscape of 'natural' and contrived noise that in its most devised form becomes the foley artist's domain.

While this new semiotic landscape opened new possibilities, it was of course not entirely 'new'. Film had always made compensatory efforts to include sound or its proxy, from live improvised piano accompaniment to the use of exaggerated lip movement and intertitles to substitute for speech. Indeed, these very visible efforts to compensate for a missing mode and its sensory realisation are in themselves an important multimodal principle. It is a kind of illusion: the use of available semiotic resources (or modes) to conjure something which cannot literally be produced:

descriptive writing in literature; *trompe l'oeuil* in the visual arts; birdsong in musical approximations; landscapes in theatre backdrops; flight in dance. It is not a weakness or lack, however: in many cases, this effort to grasp the unreachable semiotic goal drives artists to their most ingenious work – to capture music that no known scale can represent, or sound in a silent medium, or visual details in printed letters, or the flight of a swan in the leap of a dancer, or the ‘speed lines’ in a frame of comicstrip. We sometimes think of multimodal texts in terms of richness and replete semiotic texture; but lack, gaps, silences and ‘workarounds’ are just as important.

There is no space in this chapter to describe the developing multimodality of the moving image: to explore the modal laminations of digital compositing, of sonic evocation of space, of the perceptual and affective properties of 3-D, of the short-form styles of YouTube videos and the micro-editing practices of editing softwares on smart-phones. The broad principles proposed in this chapter should be applicable to these, however, as well as to the older films in the ‘back catalogue’ of cinematic history.

## **TOWARDS A THEORY OF THE KINEIKONIC**

The moving image is often seen as a matter of filming and editing – what Metz delineated as the proper substance of cinematic ‘language’, identified at the level of the shot, rather than the image (1974a). Indeed, Metz’s cinematic grammar has served as the foundation for one version of a multimodal approach to film (Bateman and Schmidt, 2011). The theory of the kineikonic takes a different approach. Burn and Parker proposed a multimodal theory of the moving image, named ‘the kineikonic mode’, a portmanteau of the Greek words for ‘to move’ (*kinein*) and ‘image’ (*eikon*) (Burn and Parker, 2003). The emphasis here was on the interplay of all the modes which contribute to the moving image: what Metz saw as the implications of the word ‘film’ (as opposed to ‘cinema’), which ‘designates the message in its plurality and codical heterogeneity’ (1974b: 58). The kineikonic also attends to a grammar of the moving image at the level of the individual frame as well as the shot. In this theory, then, the related modes of filming and editing are seen as the *orchestrating modes* of whatever the moving image contains; and their orchestration occurs in both spatial and temporal dimensions. The logic of the spatial appears to dominate if the individual frame is selected; the logic of the temporal appears to dominate if the editing track or timeline is the focus. The nature of the moving image, or at least its orchestrating modes, is the relation between the two. All other modes are included in the analysis in principle, and are identified as *contributory modes*.

This early model proposed the use of Kress and van Leeuwen’s four strata of communication: *discourse* (defined as knowledge of some aspect of the world), *design* (defined as choice of mode), *production* (defined as choice of medium) and

*distribution* (in which the text is communicated to its audience(s), often by processing through additional technologies) (Kress and van Leeuwen, 2001).

It also adapted Kress and van Leeuwen's model of visual grammar, structured around a version of Halliday's metafunctions (Kress and van Leeuwen, 1996). The adapted form of these in the early kineikonic model were termed *representation* (of the world), *orientation* (of text to audience), and *organisation* (the 'grammar' of film).

Both these frameworks are still viable, and can be used to analyse the kineikonic mode. The metafunctions work well if the object of analysis is the moving image text; the strata work well if the object of analysis is the context and processes of moving image production.

The approach to the kineikonic mode offered in this chapter develop two more analytical frameworks: the *metamodal* relation between the orchestrating modes (filming and editing) and the contributory modes, and the elaboration of the *kineikonic chronotope*, adapted from Bakhtin's metaphor of space-time relations in literature (Gibbons, 2010). These are not intended to represent a complete theory of the kineikonic, or a complete analytical apparatus, but rather an extension of the theory so far proposed. The conclusion will sketch the more obvious areas which remain to be developed.

## THE METAMODAL KINEIKONIC

*Metamodal* emphasises the nesting of modes within modes in moving image texts. The prefix 'meta-' is used to indicate 'beyondness' and 'adjacency' – cultural forms and modes within, beyond and next to each other.

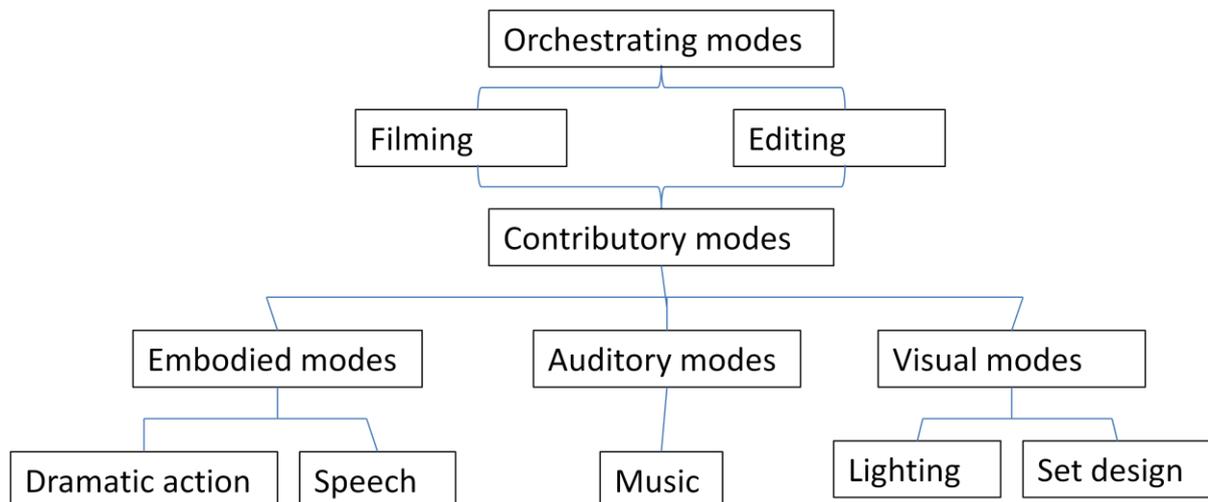
The orchestrating modes are, as we have said, *filming and editing*: the medium-specific meta-modes of the kineikonic. Filming produces spatial framing, angle, proximity and camera movement and provisional duration; editing produces temporal framing, and the orchestration of other contributory modes, especially sound and graphics. One way to imagine this overarching organisational system is to think of Eisenstein's montage principle, in which both filming and editing are concerned with the juxtaposition of images in space and time, and with the orchestration of other modes within this primary visual juxtaposition. Nevertheless, the process of filming and the process of editing effectively fall into two modes of design. Filming may resemble more the fluidity of speech; editing the fixity of writing. Filming produces spatial framing, angle, proximity and camera movement and provisional duration; and the orchestration of the 'dramatic' modes: action, speech, set and costume. Editing produces temporal framing, and the orchestration of other contributory modes, especially sound, music and graphics. However, filming anticipates and can even produce many of the functions of editing, especially in multi-camera live set-ups such as live television, where editing is replaced by mixing. Alternatively, filming may be missing, as in digital animation, while its functions are effectively performed by an extended form of editing, where the processes of editing might include the editing of

3-D animations and virtual camera positions (as is the case with the machinima work presented later in this chapter).

However we approach the analysis of filming and editing, we must then consider the work of the contributory modes. Again, this is in some ways not a new idea. For example, Roland Barthes, in his seminal work *Mythologies* (1957/1972), looks at a very specific aspect of Mankiewicz's 1953 film of Julius Caesar: at the meaning of beads of sweat of the brow of Marlon Brando, who plays Mark Anthony. This, again, reminds us that the great signifying systems of language, painting and music are not the only contributors to meaning: that a make-up artist dashing in to squeeze a drop of glycerine on Brando's forehead is part of the complex of contributory modes.

We can imagine diagrammatically the relationship between the orchestrating modes and the contributory modes. This diagram is partial (many other contributory modes are possible), and indicates only commonly-found modes in narrative film:

**FIGURE 1**



However, this is not the end of the story. Each of what we are calling here 'modes' is in fact made of more or less independent signifying resources or structures. Filming, as we have seen, puts a frame around the filmed object, establishes a distance from it, and determines an angle. These are separate structures, independently analysable, though held in connection by the apparatus of the camera and its proxy function for the viewing eye and body. These may be seen as the medium-specific meta-modes of the moving image: their function is entirely grammatical (they have no 'lexical' content); their structures are criterial to the moving image; they have an orchestrating function, providing the outer frame (both spatial and temporal) within which all other frames are contained. Similarly, editing breaks down into separately analysable elements, represented in Figure 2 as segment, transition and counterpoint (the interplay between different modes on an editing timeline).

Meanwhile, each of the contributory modes breaks down into more specific signifying systems. Language breaks into lexis and grammar, speech and writing; each of these categories further decomposes into specific resources, so that speech can be analysed syntactically, lexically, metrically, phonologically, and in terms of features such as tone and tonicity (Halliday, 1985).

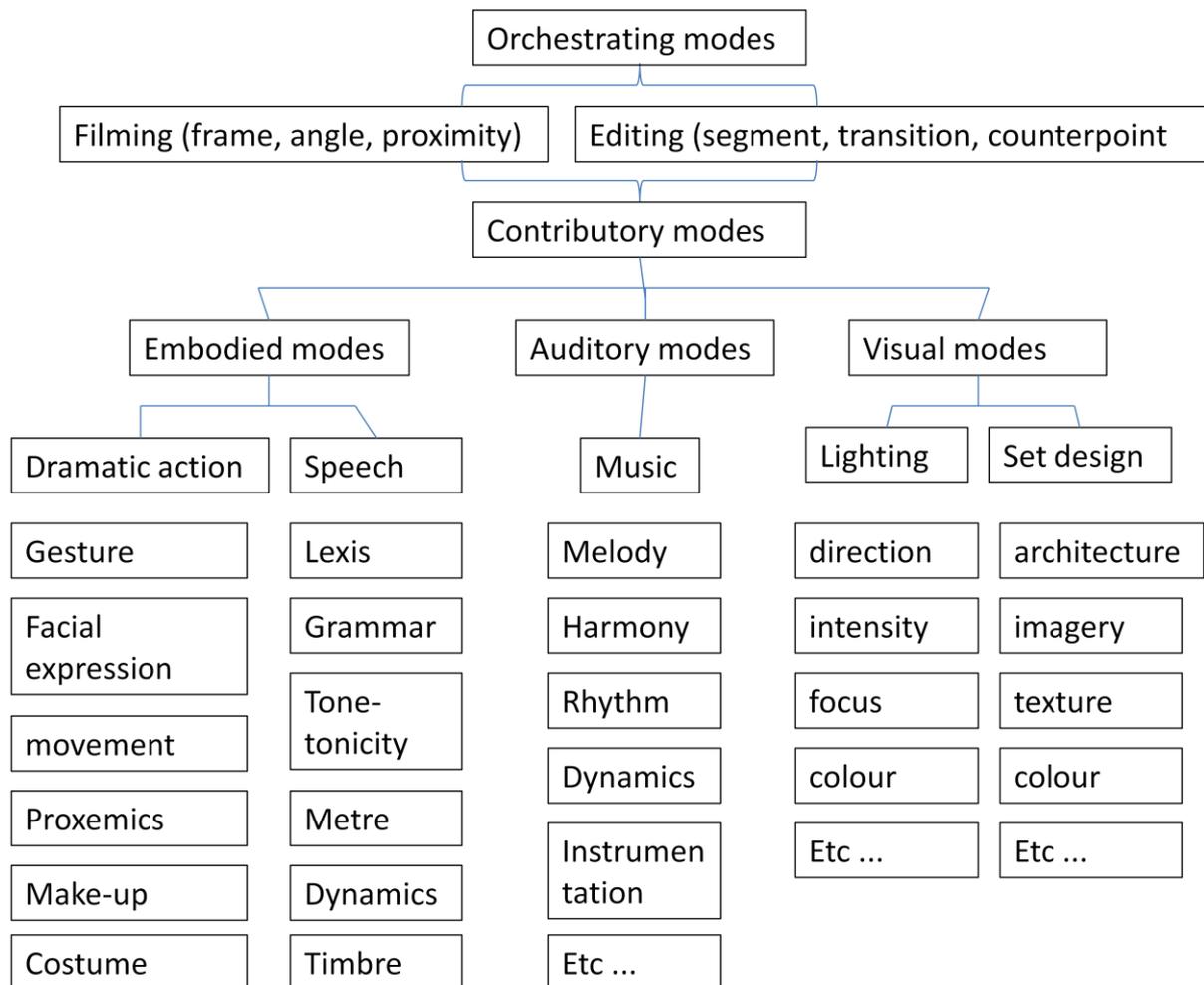
Dramatic action breaks down into gesture, itself further sub-divisible into denotative, expressive, instrumental, symbolic and other kinds of movement; (cf Kendon, 2004); facial expression, proxemics.

These resources – language and action – can be grouped as the embodied modes. Again, this offers a route to the analyst, who may want to concentrate on human entities within the moving image text: the work of actors, news presenters, voice-over artists, singers, extras, stuntmen and women, and their artificial proxies: synthespians, avatars, CGI creatures, puppets, effigies, waxworks, dolls, ventriloquists' dummies, talking animals, robots, intelligent machines, paper cut-outs, and so on.

Music can be analysed in terms of melody, tonality, harmony, rhythm, style, instrumentation, dynamics and so on. As film theorists know, its function can be diegetic (music within the narrative) or non-diegetic (the more usual sonic colouring which we are enculturated into accepting as part of an otherwise naturalistic mode of narrative. While it is often explained as an emotional accompaniment to film, it also has narrative properties, and, from a social semiotic point of view, carries particular social meanings (van Leeuwen, 1999).

A hierarchy can be constructed, then, from larger clusters of resources to minimal elements. In this respect, then, Figure 1 can be extended into the model shown in Figure 2, which again is indicative – many more semiotic resources are possible in individual moving image texts than can be represented here:

## **FIGURE 2**



One approach to the contributory modes, then, is decomposition: to break them down into progressively smaller resources, asking what the specialist role is of a particular resource in the wider context of the film.

However, the distinctive insight offered by a multimodal approach is to see how the modes work together. It is not simply a matter of decomposing larger semiotic modes into progressively smaller elements, though this may be a valuable analytical route for some researchers; and all analysts need to decide at what level of granularity they want to work. As well as looking into each mode at progressively finer levels of granularity, though, we need to look across and between modes, asking how they connect to make meanings, and what semiotic principles work across them; and how they are modelled and framed by the orchestrating modes. Some of the features of individual modes identified in Figure 2 are in fact applicable across many modes, as van Leeuwen's work on rhythm in music, speech and editing amply demonstrates (van Leeuwen, 1985). There are, again many ways to think of these processes. To add another musical metaphor, the combination of modes can be thought of as a fugue: the modes working as voices which build a theme, the relationship between them structured as a form of counterpoint. This polyphonic structure allows for the modes to develop their own contours, contribute their own colouring, yet contribute to an overall coherence. The fugue metaphor also suggests sequential structures,

such as exposition, statement of theme, coda and so on, which apply well to the temporal aspects of the kineikonic.

## **A SAMPLE ANALYSIS: METAMODAL RELATIONS IN HAMLET**

This example is taken from Laurence Olivier's film of *Hamlet* (1948). In the scene considered here, in Shakespeare's text, Ophelia is recounting to her father Polonius how Hamlet, apparently succumbing to madness, has visited her in her chamber. In the film, what is an offstage event in the play is transformed into a flashback, or *analepsis* (Genette, 1980), with the speech as accompanying voiceover. Figure 3 tabulates the main contributory modes in play (speech, music, action), and the orchestrating modes (filming and editing). The emphasis in this quite simple chart is on noting the modes and reading across them. No attempt is made to systematically represent space-time relations. The music column incorporates sections of William Walton's manuscript score for this scene.

Olivier was criticised for subordinating the high art of theatre to the popular form of cinema; but also for the opposite: producing cinema that was too 'stagy'. The effort to combine the forms can be seen in two decisions in this scene.

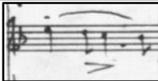
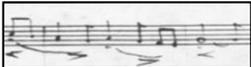
On the one hand, the scene is an example of Olivier's determination to fragment sequences of verse and drama as little as possible by cutting; it contains one of many very long shots in the film, which privilege dramatic continuity (in the same space and time) over cinematic continuity (constructed by editing shots to create the illusion of continuous space and time).

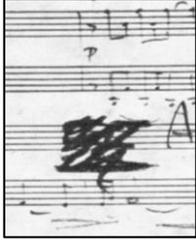
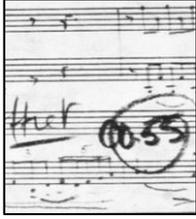
On the one hand, the scene is an example of Olivier's determination to fragment sequences of verse and drama as little as possible by cutting; it contains one of many very long shots in the film, which privilege dramatic continuity (in the same space and time) over cinematic continuity (constructed by editing shots to create the illusion of continuous space and time). Here, then, filming as an orchestrating mode is used to promote the stage as the analogous orchestrating structure in theatre.

On the other hand, editing as orchestrating mode is used to provide a bracketing effect. Hamlet is introduced as a ghostly superimposed figure (segment 4), suggesting both an other-worldly quality and that he is a product of her imagination or memory. This shot then dissolves into the two-shot in which he walks towards her, a more naturalistic co-location of the characters in the same space (segment 5). At the end of the sequence, the lighting reduces to a tight spot on Hamlet (segment 10), and the shot dissolves again into a close-up of Ophelia's face, effectively superimposed on the figure of Hamlet in the distance (segment 11). The orchestrating mode of editing, then, frames the social relations between the two through cinematic conventions: Hamlet is imagined or recalled by Ophelia; Hamlet dominates Ophelia, towering over her in the frame; Hamlet's distress is stretched

over an extended period of time in order to intensify it; the psychic bond between the two is temporally and spatially framed by the two dissolves.

However, the introduction of the superimposed shot disrupts the apparent naturalism and theatrical continuity. Cook argues that this film, like the other three adaptations of Hamlet he considers, is firmly located in the mainstream 'continuity' style of Western cinema, whose controlling aim is to efface the markers of fragmented space and time to produce the illusion of spatio-temporal continuity (Cook, 2012). The superimposition in this scene, however, disrupts this a little, briefly disorienting the viewer: is Hamlet in her mind, or in her chamber? And, in relation to constructions of cultural value in film aesthetics, is this a formulaic popular piece or an example of radical montage? The uncertainty testifies to the confusion felt at the time about how to view this piece of popular Shakespeare; but also indicates the fragility of such reductive cultural valuations.

SPEECH		MUSIC	ACTION	FILMING	EDITING
1. As I was sowing in my Closet		Musical passage begins: D minor; low notes on 1 <sup>st</sup> violin.	Sewing; raises head	Medium C/U; central framing	First shot of the sequence fades from black.
2.		1 <sup>st</sup> violin passage continues.	Eyes move to L	Zoom to C/U	First shot
3.		1 <sup>st</sup> violin passage continues.		Lighting dim to diffuse low-key	First shot
4. Lord Hamlet with his doublet all vnlac'd,		Insistent repeated phrases.	Head turn to L; Hamlet stands	Superimposed shot backlit; main shot still low-key-lit	Superimposition of long-shot of Hamlet; Fast dissolve to next shot
5. Pale as his shirt,		 Sustained top E followed by decrescendo	Hamlet walks forward	Wider two-shot (C/U and LS); key light raised; back and fill lights raised	Second shot continues into long take
6. And with a looke so pitious in purport,		 Falling cadence with crescendo and decrescendo	Hamlet comes close to Ophelia; she turns away from camera; raises hand to mouth	Camera moves up (low angle)	long take

7.	As if he had been loosed out of hell, To speake of horrors:					long take
8.	he comes before me.					long take
9.	He tooke me by the wrist, and held me hard;			He seizes her right hand with his.	Frame maintains low angle medium shot.	long take

[...]

10.	And to the last Bended Their light		Violin phrases lengthen; die away.	Hamlet walks backward; pauses in doorway	Camera tracks slowly towards Hamlet, excluding Ophelia from shot; lights dim to a spot on Hamlet.	Long shot dissolves into a superimposed image of Hamlet.
11.	on me.		Violin rising passage; harp chord on "me".	Ophelia looks at camera; then turns head to right, raising hand to face.	Close-up of Ophelia.	Long shot of Hamlet dissolves into close-up of Ophelia.

**FIGURE 3: METAMODAL ANALYSIS OF A SCENE FROM HAMLET**

How do the contributory modes function within these frames?

The words have many roles. Their main role is narration: a first-person narrative in which a series of actions are attributed to Hamlet. The first ("he comes before me") is delayed by three adjectival phrases denoting madness. The third of these is supplemented by a simile emphasising the extreme nature of his mental state. The

second action (“He took me by the wrist, and held me hard”) is amplified in the dramatic action by a series of movements of the arm and head in which Hamlet gazes at Ophelia, his distraction and distress indicated by these movements, by his facial expressions, and by the parting of his lips in the sigh which the speech denotes. The speech is also able to locate the events in a past tense, rather than the dramatic present. The bracketing of the scene between the two dissolve transitions has a similar effect: dissolves in film often signify a change in time or place.

Furthermore, the mode of spoken language is accorded particular weight in the whole production, unsurprisingly, as the carrier of the Shakespearean text. The editor of the film, Helga Cranston, describes how, if the language is not clear enough in a shot, the lines are taken from another shot of the same scene and edited in to clarify it: “With Shakespeare, it is important for the words to be well spoken, clear and easy to follow. The average cinema audience is not used to verse.” (Cross, 1948: 58). What sounds like a practical consideration here may also reveal a tension experienced by others in the production, between a veneration of the Shakespearean text (a version of what Shaw termed ‘bardolatry’ (1901/2000)), and an impetus to popularise the plays through the medium of film. As we have seen, this tension was experienced by Olivier himself; and it was differently felt by the composer, William Walton.

If we move from a consideration of a single mode to read across the grid, we can see how the voiceover narration is accompanied by parallel dramatic actions. How do the distinctive affordances of each mode complement each other, however? The simile in segment 7 is a good example of what language can do: the visual scene is unable to produce the specific effect of a comparison to hell. On the other hand, the dramatic action is obliged to make decisions about exactly how “He took me by the wrist and held me hard”. He pulls her to her feet, and clasps her close in a kind of embrace, a move which serves to extend or amplify the meaning of the words. Between them, the language and action are constructing a complex relationship between the depicted characters. In the wider context of the play, questions of love, sex and power are raised in the unfolding of this relationship, and conveyed through action, gesture and architectural imagery. The “Get thee to a nunnery” scene, for example, sees the distressed Ophelia thrown weeping to the floor at the foot of a flight of stairs by Hamlet; while some commentators have suggested that the repeated visual trope of staircases in the film recall an event of sexual abuse suffered by Olivier as a boy (Cook, 2011).

There is no space here to conduct an analysis of the tone, tempo and rhythm of Jean Simmons’ voice. In general, however, the tonal contours emphasise the surprise at Hamlet’s appearance, and connote sympathy for his condition. The delivery also includes a number of lengthy pauses, determining the temporality of the sequence, slowing down the accompanying gestures. This also fragments the iambic pentameters of the blank verse. In spite of the editor’s and Olivier’s claims about the importance of the verse, cinematic duration is privileged here over the continuous

flow of the verse. The speech is also cut: in comparison with the text from the 1623 First Folio, the first line in the film omits “My Lord” (addressed to Polonius), reducing the line to four iambs; while the third line is a combination of a cut version of two lines of the play, resulting in eight iambs. The iambic pentameter, then, is at least partially dismantled. Again, these transformations suggest a tension between a characteristically sparser use of speech in cinema, appealing to a popular audience; and the desire to preserve and venerate the dramatic text. These tensions between modes might cause us to hesitate a little over harmonious images of multimodal texts. The fugue which we mentioned earlier, for example, would be unlikely to exhibit such tensions. It would be misleading to suggest that the multimodality of film stands as a guarantee for a perfect union of the arts, a cinematic version of Wagner’s *Gesamtkunstwerk*. Rather – and this is also the case with opera, of course – we might expect to see tensions, leakages, incoherences characteristic of artworks whose chief characteristic might be semiotic and stylistic promiscuity rather than perfectly-controlled harmony.

To turn to another mode, the music is represented in the chart by sections of a reproduction of William Walton’s autograph score (Cross, 1948: 61). The music has received a good deal of critical attention, which in some ways parallels that given to the film. Where Olivier is both praised and criticised for mixing the conventions of classical theatre and popular film, Walton receives praise for employing the techniques of classical composition in film as well as criticism for what some see as ‘obvious’ conventions of film music, such as the use of leitmotifs to herald and accompany main characters. Kendra Leonard critiques the theme he developed for Ophelia: a folksong-like melody carried by the oboe: ‘Ophelia’s theme is one redolent of the imagined idyllic pastoral Albion - an England of thatched cottages, wildflower gardens, bucolic modal folksongs and rustic morris dances’ (Leonard, 2009). Leonard sees this as an oppressive representation of simple-mindedness in Ophelia, part of a general strategy in the film to disempower her in what Leonard calls a ‘male aurality’, the sonic equivalent to Laura Mulvey’s well-known cinematic male gaze (Mulvey, 1975).

However, Leonard omits any consideration of the sewing scene. The music here is quite different. The oboe leitmotif is not used, nor the “sombre and ambiguous theme” (Leonard, 2009) associated with Hamlet. Instead, the scene has its own music: a poignant, troubling piece in D minor, characterised mainly by a virtuosic first violin (segments 1-3), complemented later by a harp (segment 7). The piece is stylistically suggestive of what Scott identifies as Orientalism in nineteenth century Romantic music, containing several features he lists as typical of this style: use of modes, ‘Arabesques and ornamental line’, rapid-pace passages of an irregular fit, harp glissandi (Scott, 1998). He associates Rimsky-Korsakov with this style; and indeed, Walton’s passage for this scene recalls the Kalendar Prince movement of Scheherazade, which also uses solo violin and harp.

What, then, is the outcome of this music against the other modes? To begin with, we can say that, whatever the merits of Leonard's analysis of the simplicity of Ophelia's leitmotif, here the music carries no such associations. The minor key (or Dorian mode), the shifting rhythms and uncertain harmony, the oriental pastiche, produces an emotional colouring of darkness, ambiguity and exoticism. Also, unlike the leitmotivic themes, this music cannot be associated explicitly with one character or the other: it begins with Ophelia, before Hamlet appears, for example. Therefore, it can be seen as a representation of, as well as an affective underscoring of, the relationship between them. Its emotional charge connects with Ophelia's distressed sympathy, and also with Hamlet's agitation: the peak of the crescendo is synchronised with his 'piteous sigh' (itself signified, as we have seen, by Olivier's mime and Simmons' voiceover).

As with the editing and filming, then, the relationship of the music and the dramatic and speech modes is one of complementarity. It reinforces, but also adds distinctive connotative meanings. The most opaque of these is the touch of Orientalism. While Walton's score contains many pastiche-like echoes of other styles, such as early music in the Mousetrap scene (Bennett, 2011), or folk music in Ophelia's leitmotif, to introduce a touch of mock-Arabia here seems confusing, especially as other modes are employed by Olivier to suggest Nordic austerity: the set designs, the European mediaeval imagery on the walls, his blond-dyed hair. However, it may be that Walton felt the 'gypsy' connotations of the 'style hongrois' to be an apt representation of Hamlet's wildness in this scene. Another possible explanation might be that the scenario of Scheherazade, the story-telling princess, seemed an appropriate metaphor for Ophelia as she delivers her voiceover narrative.

There is no space here to consider the lighting, costume and set design in detail. However, we can use them to introduce the notion of '*validity*' in social semiotic and multimodal theory. 'Validity' covers the means by which texts and their makers can claim veracity, authenticity, credibility. One of the key ways of achieving this in modern fiction and film is by the use of naturalistic devices, such as everyday dialogue, or photographic imagery. These devices claim a kind of 'reality' in their appeal to the reader or viewer: and indeed, critical analysis of their effects have been traditionally found in academic and popular discourses of 'realism'. But texts' claims to be true need not be naturalistic: they may claim a deeper political truth, as Bertolt Brecht did; or a psychological truth; or even a truth-to-genre (van Leeuwen, 1999). In the case of Olivier's film, the claims are ambiguous. The costumes are detailed and Elizabethan in style. The sets contain impressionistic mediaeval-style pictures, but are otherwise quite sparse and even abstract. As with the music, then, hints are given about historical time, but we are also disorientated, and the play is abstracted from any very clear sense of period. The claim to validity, then, is not clear: at times it appears to rest on certain kinds of naturalism, as in the costume design, or the perspectival clarity of the deep focus photography. At other times, it seems to suggest a landscape of the mind, the arches, chambers, staircases and seascapes

presenting psychic turmoil and confusion. The claim here to validity is quite different. These modalities are carried through the language of the play, which conducts its own kind of trickery with what is or is not real; and, as we have seen, with the music, with its play of pastiches hinting at early European music, Baroque, folksong, and Orientalism, while also incorporating the modernist expressionism which is the dominant cultural context of Walton's oeuvre.

In very specific ways, then, the interplay between the modes, framed by the orchestrating modes, elaborates the detail of narrative, affect and thematic representations of sexuality and madness. More generally, the modes conduct what van Leeuwen terms 'semiotic import', analogous to Barthes' principle of connotation (van Leeuwen, 2005). Here, the imported meanings struggle for coherence, in particular the tension in this scene between signifiers of Nordic austerity in set and costume, and of mock-oriental exoticism in the music. At a more general level still, the tension between the Shakespearean text and its associated dramatic traditions on the one hand, and the style of popular cinema on the other, suggests the cultural tensions such a project could not hope to avoid, and which still exist in negotiations between the Shakespeare heritage industry and attempts to transform the plays for new audiences.

## THE KINEIKONIC CHRONOTOPE

Early work on the kineikonic mode suggested, for the purpose of analysis, a distinction between the spatial axis of the moving image and the temporal axis (Burn & Parker, 2003). The former was associated with the 'synchronic syntagm' – effectively the single frame. If film is stopped, and its temporality suspended, we have, effectively, a photograph. Temporal modes such as speech, music and movement are also suspended. This allows for an analysis of visual modes, including those contributing to the setting, the visual design of characters, including costume; and certain functions of shot-grammar, such as the locating function of the establishing shot. The temporal axis was associated with the 'diachronic syntagm' – the moving sequence. Here the temporal elements include movement of bodies, objects and landscapes (an 'unfreezing' of the still); music, sound and speech, which are entirely temporal; the movement of the camera and frame; and the succession of interstitial 'transitions' (fades, wipes, dissolves, etc). While this distinction may seem overly formalistic, even antagonistic to the very nature of the *moving* image, one justification can be grounded in Barthes' analysis of the cinematic still (1978), in which he argues that the still has a particular quality, allowing a kind of resistance of the tyranny of narrative time, and relating to cultural practices such as the publication of stills in the *Cahiers du Cinéma*. To adapt Barthes' argument, we can say that an analytical distinction between still and moving elements allows a critical perspective, not least for school students; but also that it relates to actual cultural practices in which stills represent aspects of (even the whole) film: posters, publicity photos,

images in film magazines, on T-shirts and other merchandise; and of course the illustrative use of stills in academic and educational discourse (Burn, 1999).

Two more qualifications remain. Firstly, the analytical separation of synchronic and diachronic syntagm is only the first step. The next is to consider how they relate to each other – how the logics of space (the disposition of bodies and objects in space; the relation of space to perception and point of view) are related to the logics of time (movement, rhythm, tempo, direction, tense, order, duration).

Finally, Gibbons (2010) valuably extends the notion of the chronotope to cover ways in which moving image texts made by young people develop over space and time, moving through different spaces and times of production, of exhibition, and of transformation and dissemination, including the spatio-temporal contexts of online display. Here, as in all this work, text and context, form and meaning, aesthetics and the social, go hand in hand. This contextual extension of the chronotope can be seen in relation to Kress & van Leeuwen's multimodal strata – discourse, design, production, distribution (2001). While these are not conceived as chronological, they, like the chronotope, suggest a progressive move from discursive contexts and resources, through processes of textual design, to communicative contexts of dissemination and exhibition; and finally to contexts of interpretation, appropriation, transformation, and the practices of the mash-up and re-mix culture (Jenkins, 1992; Willett, 2009).

## **THE KINEIKONIC CHRONOTOPE: MAKING MACHINIMA**

This example is drawn from a project in which a group of 30 eleven-year-olds made a machinima film<sup>1</sup>. Machinima is perhaps most recent cultural form in the world of animation. 'Machinima' is a portmanteau word combining machine and cinema, with a substitution of the 'e' by an 'i', implying animation and animé. It is defined by Kelland *et al* as 'the art of making animated films within a realtime 3-D environment' (2005: 10). It can be thought of as animation made from the 3-D environments and animated characters of computer games or virtual immersive worlds. The first machinima films were produced by players of the game Quake in the mid-1990s. In this case, the students used a proprietary 3-D animation software, Moviestorm, building characters and sets, and composing them into a film narrative devised by the group.

The process can be seen as a practical example of multimodality in action. Having devised the script, the children worked in specialist groups on character design, set design, music composition and recording, and performance and recording of the

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<sup>1</sup> This project, 'Montage, Mash-up and Machinima', was funded by First Light, and was a partnership between the Institute of Education, University of London, the British Film Institute, the University of Leeds, and Moviestorm Ltd.

vocal track. Modes in use included, then, visual design, vocal acting, music and (in generating the script) spoken improvisation and writing. The students designing characters had to determine how to represent attributes of age, ethnicity, gender and narrative function (Figure 4). The software makes this possible by providing menus for clothing, face type and shape, age markers, ethnicity markers (skin colour, hair), makeup, 'distinguishing features such as scars and tattoos'. While some of these are 'one-off- choices, such as a dress or a jacket, others offer tools for manipulation at a finer level of granularity. Faces, for example, can be changed through manipulation of slider tools controlling colour, shape of chin, nose, eyebrows, eyes, mouth, elements of facial expression. In this respect, designing a character resembles designing an avatar in various games and virtual worlds; and also resembles cultural practices such as doll-making and dressing for girls, both in its older scissors-and-paper form and in digital online versions.

The two girls designing the teenage protagonist Jeff chose straight brown hair and a pale complexion, because he was a geek "who might play World of Warcraft, I imagine always geeky boys playing that". The boys making the set for Jeff's bedroom agreed that he might be a WoW player, and that they had put a computer on his desk which he could play it on. Neither of the girls had played WoW, though one had a brother who had. They both said they played The Sims, and described the kind of subversive practices enjoyed by players, such as building families and making them over-eat, or using the 'Die by Flies' cheat. They also described how creating Sims families resembled designing characters in Moviestorm:

M: I played one Sims game and it's when you're a vet, and it's not like this but it's the same sort of basis, like you've got a character and you dress them up and you make them do stuff and make them go places.

Here, then, the design emphasis is on the synchronic syntagm: the spatial characteristics of the character and set. The frame resembles the photographic frame, and the image is built up in a series of layers: the image elements in the software, like those in Photoshop, are digital filters providing interchangeable options which can be freely experimented with, switched on and off, subjected to scalar enlargement or contraction, and so on.

In many ways, these forms of lamination seem distinctive of the digital era. However, we can also see them in a longer cinematic tradition of composition in the filmic frame, the best early example being Mèlies. In his animations, images were built up in layers of physical resources (actors, makeup, paper, cardboard, plaster) and optical devices (masks, filters), to produce fantastic visual effects. The digital laminations of children accustomed to character-building in The Sims or in online role-playing games can be seen as a kind of successor to the tradition of visual compositing and a multimodal practice in film.

Similarly, while these children are focusing on the spatial aspects of the textual chronotope, we can see traces of the extended dialogic chain within which their work sits. Earlier practices are hinted at: the images carries echoes of cultural types salient to the children (teenage girls, geeks and gamers).

Having made the assets, the children move to making the film itself. Here, then, they insert the spatial assets (sets and characters) into the moving sequence, using the software's virtual cameras to frame images and movement, and the timeline to construct the temporal sequence. The relations of the textual chronotope are built up, through semiotic decisions based on what they want to say, and how they have experienced such things articulated in their own experience of the moving image.

Martha and Rosa, then, are editing the scene in which two characters, Jeff and Dr T, have arrived at Cleopatra's palace, and have to convince her guard to let them in. They are editing to the printed script, a transcript of the improvised dialogue of the voice-acting group. They describe what they need to add to make the script into a film:

Researcher: What do you need to do to turn this [script] into a film?

M: Well, you need to add in, like, gestures, and, and we've –

R: and dialogue.

AB: what kind of gestures?

R: [smacks one fist into the other] when they ask him if they can go in, and he says 'why?'.  
[smacks one fist into the other]

They have not yet designed camera angles (this is done at a later stage with the Moviestorm software, after basic moves have been plotted). But they are asked what their intentions are:

Researcher: And what do you have to do with camera angles?

R: So you just put like where the camera would be, so like what the shots would be, so if you were zooming in on a person's face, you would have to move the camera in a certain, um, angle, to make it.

M: And you have to think about what the audience want to see, so which characters are most important at the time, and which ones are talking, which ones are doing stuff, cos if you've got someone doing stuff and the camera's not on them it's kind of pointless, so you've got to think about where the camera is, what the characters are doing.

R: So if there was something really dramatic, like if she was saying "I wonder what this is all about", it could be on her face [frames her face with her hands] and she could look really worried.

AB: What else can you do with the camera?

M: you can kind of twist it ....

AB: If you were filming two people talking, how would you do it?

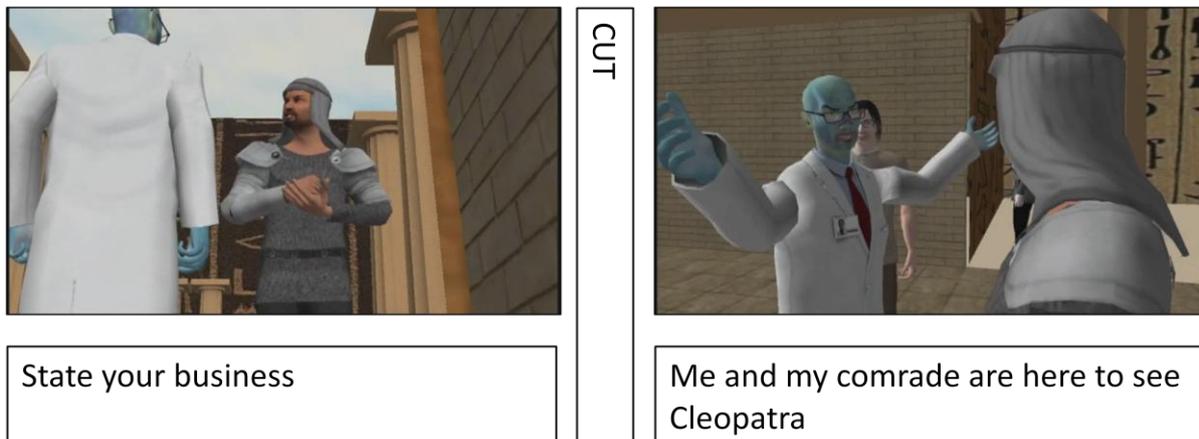
R: you'd put the camera there, and one of them would be there, and one would be there [indicating side-by-side with hands].

AB: what's your other option?

R: you could put the camera on the person talking ...

M: and then switch it round.

This bears out earlier research suggesting that children of this age may not spontaneously consider the shot-reverse shot structure despite their familiarity with it (Burn and Durrant, 1997). Here, then, they suggest a two-shot for a conversation, and gradually move towards the idea of shot-reverse-shot in response to questions. They are, however, quite confident about the idea of shot distance and its function of emphasis, and also describe kinds of camera movement. They also describe the function of low and high angle shots to signify power, although these have not been explicitly taught at this stage. When asked how these ideas could apply to their scene, they suggest that Cleopatra and the guard might be filmed from a low angle. Once they moved on to insert camera angles, they did exactly this. Figure 4 shows the two shots in which Dr T and Jeff meet Cleopatra's guard.



**FIGURE 4: SHOT-REVERSE-SHOT (LOW CAMERA ANGLE), SPEECH AND MUSIC**

Here, then, the textual chronotope develops through a series of understandings about the social meanings of the image they are creating. They can imagine the characters as figures in social space; and if the analogy for them is their own experience of bodies in social space, then co-location of two bodies in conversation is an obvious representational strategy. However, as they consider mobile point-of-view for future spectators, the temporal alternation of shot-reverse-shot becomes a more appropriate option. Accordingly, two quite different temporal structures are imagined in relation to the disposition of (virtual) bodies in space, to the spatial frame of the (virtual) camera, and to the temporal frame of the timeline. The orchestrating modes are physically represented in the editing frame and the editing timeline of the software, as in any digital editing software, employing transparent metaphors of time and space (frames and linear segments), and historic metaphors of editing processes (such as cutting razors, spools of film and loudspeakers); and functioning as a design surface which embodies the kineikonic chronotope, and visually references convergent processes of audiovisual digital design: the 'multimodal mixing-desk' (Burn & Parker, 2003). The contributory mode of speech adds a complementary temporality, framed in time with the edit – the gap between the two lines of dialogue align with the cut in the visual frame, representing conversational turn-taking. Meanwhile, the social actions of the speech, indicating power (a command) and compliance (an information offer) align with the shot angles and gesture repertoires (fist in the palm; open arms), functioning as what Kendon calls *utterance uses*, as distinct from gestures expressive of affect only (Kendon, 2004). Here, the embodied modes of gesture and speech, usually produced simultaneously by an actor, are separately designed, the choice of gestures following the meanings of the pre-recorded speech. In effect they are realised within the editing as part of the orchestration function.

The contributory mode of music adds a different temporality – a sequence of three phrases which run across the cut. This phrase – which repeats in a loop through much of the Egyptian scene – was designed by the Music group to connote an 'Egyptian' flavour, carried by the modal structure (Aeolian mode) and the mordant (a three-note ornamentation) on the penultimate note. Like Walton's score for the Ophelia scene above, then this sequence signifies 'oriental' via pastiche, in a complementary relation to the imagery of hieroglyphs and Egyptian costumes provided by the set and character designers. The music also contrasts with the shot-reverse-shot of the image and speech elements. The latter suggest the fixed temporality of film; the former suggests the elastic temporality of videogames, in which looped music is typically used for gameplay sequences of unpredictable duration. Culturally, this temporal contrast indicates how machinima is, both generically and for these children in particular, a hybrid form poised midway between game and cinema.

In general, then, the function of the kineikonic chronotope in this example can be summarised in three ways:

The design of the contributory modes (character, set, music, speech) precedes the design of the orchestrating modes, and includes forms of lamination (of images), looping, iteration, remix and improvisation (music), and intentional construction of affective charge (speech).

The design of the orchestrating modes constructs the synchronic syntagm (adjusting the virtual camera to choose distance and angle), followed by the diachronic syntagm (plotting the movements of characters, gestures, facial expressions; segmenting the shots). These decisions display particular social interests: affiliation to particular tropes in popular cinema (combat scenes, aliens, exotic landscapes, time travel and video-gaming protagonists); changing awareness of the social relation between their own preoccupations and those of possible future audiences.

The wider chronotope reaches back to earlier experiences both of film and game, and of film-making projects in primary school; and forwards to exhibitions of the films in the local cinema and on Youtube. Again, the children imagine different meanings their film might hold for different audiences: peers, parents, and undifferentiated global audiences.

## **CONCLUSION: FUTURE POSSIBILITIES**

In the space of this chapter, it has only been possible to elaborate two analytical strategies: the metamodal kineikonic and the kineikonic chronotope. Future work on the analytical possibilities of the multimodal moving image within this approach are suggested by researchers who have begun work on this model.

Burn & Parker have explored how the Hallidayan metafunctions operate in relation to the kineikonic mode (2003). We have also looked at the material medium of animation in relation to Kress and van Leeuwen's account of technologies of inscription (Kress and van Leeuwen, 1996; Burn & Parker, 1999). These pieces suggest further possible developments.

Gibbons has developed, as noted above, the idea of the chronotope in relation to the kineikonic; and this model, perhaps alongside Kress and van Leeuwen's semiotic strata, can be taken further. It is particularly important in its ability to encompass the wider socio-cultural contexts of moving image production (Gibbons, 2010; Curwood & Gibbons, 2009).

Hurr has explored ways of documenting, tabulating and notating the kineikonic text, in relation to film art installation in gallery space. The analytical grid used in this chapter is a relatively simple one, even by comparison to Eisenstein's diagrams of movement in film. Hurr's work shows how fine-grained it is possible for transcriptions to be in the attempt to capture the wide range of contributory modes, and the framing functions of the orchestrating modes (Hurr, 2012).

Cannon has applied the analytical structure of the kineikonic to moving image work by young people in a project with the Cinémathèque Française, exploring how the

metaphor of the 'multimodal mixing-desk' can apply to digital production practices and associated literacies (Cannon, 2011).

Yet another development might consider the question of the aesthetic of the moving image in relation to multimodality. Here, aesthetics might be explored in relation to sense-perception and embodiment in film, drama, music and the other modes in play; in relation to design and style; and in relation to taste and cultural value.

However, as specific analytical protocols are developed, it might also be expected that the value of this general approach will be debated. From the point of view of the discipline of Film Studies, it might be objected that a fully-elaborated field of film semiotics already exists. The exploration of film as a kind of language in the semiotics of Metz has been assiduously developed by his followers, in particular Robert Stam (eg Stam, 1992). Film semiotics is still alive and well; though what new approaches have been developed since the moment of high structuralism is a matter of question. At the same time, we have seen a movement to question the use of high theory in film studies, represented by Bordwell and Carroll's *Post-Theory* (1996), one effect of which has been to propose a mid-level analytical approach to film analysis which Bordwell and Thompson's influential text-books represent (Bordwell & Thompson, 2001). Elsewhere, the alliance of Film Studies and Cultural Studies has seen an emphasis on audience research and on cultural histories, which largely bypass the question of textual analysis.

We can propose a number of answers to the question "why do we need a multimodal theory of the moving image?" One is that Film Studies has arguably over-emphasised filming and editing, at the expense of the other semiotic modes; or else it has studied these other modes in isolation, as in specialist work on sound, music or lighting. Another argument is that film, in the age of 'new media', is no longer a self-contained multimodal form, if it ever was. Indeed, part of the argument of the kineikonic approach is that the moving image has never possessed the kind of formal purity some cineastes would like to assert; rather, it has always been a promiscuous medium, and the cultural frames surrounding it have always been permeable. Now, however, its frames are themselves newly enframed by the display and commentariat of youtube, by the trailers and interactive design interfaces of film-on-demand, by the very different generic frames of computer games, and by the mobile transformations of smart-phones. Multimodality offers a way to read across these phenomena of contemporary communication: to pay full attention to the century-old grammar of the moving image while integrating this analysis coherently with an analysis of other frames, laminates, contexts. Most importantly, perhaps, it offers a way to read across from text to context, from producers of moving images to those who used to be known as audiences, but who increasingly actively remake moving image texts for themselves. The contexts here include recreational 'work', professional work, and education, broadly conceived. In this latter context, where much of my own work has been situated, the kineikonic mode can be seen as the basis of a specific set of practices for which the word 'literacy' has often been a

shorthand metaphor, whether in practice, research or policy (Burn and Durran, 2007; Jewitt and Kress, 2003). Future work in this domain might find a better metaphor; but the wider social implication is that the expressive, communicative and artistic practices confined to elite groups in the time of Olivier are now accessible to eleven year-olds. The kineikonic mode has become a common language; though, like all language, it is learned through an often uneven distribution of labour across domestic and educational sites, and the pedagogic processes involved, whatever their level of visibility, need to be differently provided for at all levels of education.

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