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abstract

Cinematic Intent explores methods of experimental film making and how experimental film makers relate more intimately with their audience. In an attempt to link the genres of experimental film, this dissertation focuses on the self-reflexive techniques used by both narrative and non-narrative experimental film makers. In non-narrative film making, artists like Andy Warhol and Stan Brakhage have directed films using dreamlike metaphors to lure the viewer into their vision encouraging the physiological responses that are inherent in reactions to the material world and daydreaming. And in manipulating narrative structures, narrative film makers from Orson Welles to Steven Soderbergh have engaged audiences into becoming more than a sympathetic viewer of their drama, but a more active participant in the actual motion picture. For the greater part of the past 75 years, experimental film has been only seen as that which is produced outside of Hollywood and its inflated budgets, but using film theory and trends in film making throughout the recent history of cinema, the conclusion can be drawn that experimental film, regardless of its method of funding, is an exercise in intensifying spectator engagement.

introduction

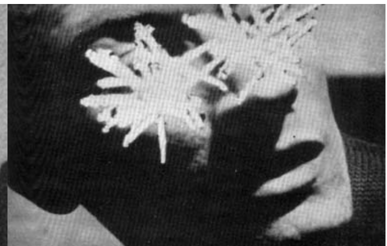
The art of cinema has undergone a lot of transformations since the first reels shot in the late 1800's. From the introduction of sound and colour to the ominous creation of studios, motion picture companies, and regulating associations, it is a miracle that film has stayed an art at all. In *Cinematic Intent*, I will define a link in the main genres of experimental cinematic art. Though the natural course would be to define experimental cinematic art first. It could initially be defined as anything produced outside of Hollywood, but this certainly does a major disservice to everything from F.W. Murnau's poetic 1927 film *Sunrise:A Song of Two Humans* to Spike Jonze's radical play on narrative in 1999's *Being John Malkovich*. Since the silent era, film makers in and outside of Hollywood have been exploring unconventional means of cinematic expression and over the course of the past 75 years, these film makers have been classified as avant-garde (1920's-30's), experimental (1940's-50's), underground (1960's-70's), and independent (1980's on) (Horak, 1995). Yet they all seem to have the same agenda. Though their budgets and visions are entirely different, there is an intense desire to communicate with the spectator in a way that makes the cinematic experience more active.

In the first chapter, I will explain the basic principles of the cinematic experience and how it relates to experimental film making. Though a recent 'independent' film has little in common with Andy Warhol films in the 1960's, a similar association with the audience occurs in which narrative and non-narrative film makers enhance viewer participation. Recently, the influence of 1960's and 70's cinema has given life to a new wave of experimenting, merging techniques used by narrative and non-narrative film makers thus bridging the gap in their film making. I will look more closely at the experimentation of this time in chapter two. Film makers from Warhol to Stanley Kubrick were challenging the notions of tra-

ditional film making with both self-reflexive and avant-garde techniques.

In looking closer at the multiplicity of techniques in recent experimental film, I will explore the work of Steven Soderbergh in his 1999 film *The Limey* to see how these techniques are employed and why. His film attempts to visualise memory and his style engages the audience with both their collective cinematic memory and the repetition of key points in the film. Currently, Soderbergh and other film makers are using unique narrative devices to change the perception of the cinematic experience achieving with narrative what the avant-garde achieved with dreams.

Un Chien Andalou **(Dali/Bunuel)**



Reflections on Black **(Stan Brakhage)**

the cinematic experience

The audience's physical reaction to a film indicates a deeper understanding of the film they are watching. Film audiences have become passionate about effectively engaging film since the beginning of the industry. At the premiere of *Don Juan*, one of the early films to incorporate sound in time with dialogue, one person described the experience by saying, 'no closer approach to resurrection has ever been made by science' (Walker, 1978). This is why many narrative film makers take the liberty to let the audience into the film and then reflect their very participation in the film back to them. As early as Laurel and Hardy movies like *Brats* in 1930, there have been scenes where the actors look directly into the camera to incorporate the audience as 'not a by-product of the exhibition...but an essential apparatus of the camera' (Dixon, 1995) and supposing this, a film like this could not exist without the viewer at all. Yet self-reflexive cinema is not necessarily so literal.

The strength of self reflexive cinema was tested early on by Russian director Sergei Eisenstein. In 1925, his film *The Battleship Potemkin* used editing to establish the gravity of the events that took place during a 1905 mutiny. One scene where a sailor is washing a dish and sees that it reads, 'Give us this day our daily bread,' then smashes it, cuts over ten times (Eisenstein, 1925). Eisenstein claims that in his use of montage,

> It includes in the creative process the emotions and mind of the spectator. The spectator is compelled to proceed along the self same road the author travelled in creating the image. The spectator not only sees the represented elements of the finished work, but also experiences the dynamic process and assembly of the image just as it was experienced by the author (Eisenstein, 1943).

In this way, the editing of the narrative has become essential in experimental narrative film making to take the audience to a heightened level of engagement. Different ways of presenting characters and tying

their experiences together can lure the audience in as more than a sympathetic witness. The Hollywood default tactic would be to present a linear narrative with a group of characters that the audience can relate to, but often the experimental narrative film takes an unsentimental varied view that the audience can interpret rather than simply watch.

Low budget narrative films have always been self-reflexive. In the early work of American director, Jim Jarmusch, *Mystery Train* used intertwining characters in and around a hotel to illustrate relation ships and break up the narrative as a predecessor to similar films like *Pulp Fiction* (Andrew, 1998). His most recent film, *Ghost Dog: The Way of the Samurai* intertwines characters with cartoons. Whenever something violent is about to occur, someone is watching short violent cartoons (Jarmusch, 1999) using the familiarity of other moving film to reel the audience into the film, much like the technique of using film footage for flashbacks which I will discuss in the third chapter about Steven Soderbergh's *The Limey*.

The cinematic experience can often be likened to escapism and dreaming. Even physically, involuntary muscle reflexes and motor impulses mirror the dreaming experience. The tightening of muscles during quiet suspense scenes or flinching during violent slasher films are common as we are entering into the physical reality of the movie screen. Unlike any other form of visual recording, film images record reality 'for it's own sake...The spectator can not help reacting to them as he would the material aspects of nature in the raw' (Kracauer, 1960). This is perhaps why Hollywood has long been nicknamed 'The Dream Factory'. Cinema has the potential to make the audience a participant in this dream, as the audience does respond without actually experiencing anything the characters on the screen are portraying. If the art of self-reflexive cinema supposes an intrinsic bond between the audience and the author of the image, this form of cinema supposes an intrinsic bond between the audience and the image itself.

Cinema may have the capacity to lull us into the world of dreams, but because you have to be awake to watch a movie and since they are not likely to conform to each individual's fantasy, films are more likely to fulfill the function of 'wish fulfillment...by offering the idea that what is projected is of the utmost significance' (Allen, 1995). Manipulation of the physiological aspects of cinema is often found in non-narrative and silent films where one would be likely to find the use of actual metaphorical and iconic symbols. The infamous camera/eye metaphor in avant-garde film is just one example.

There has always been a conflict between the visual artist and the camera. As a camera is a manufactured way of recording light, it can shape the final product to its own end and limitations. Avant-garde film makers are often wanton to resolve this conflict. From as early as Luis Bunuel and

Salvador Dali's surrealistic film *Un Chien Andalou* with its shot of the eye being sliced in half to the superimposition of the eye over Stan Brakhage's film *Song I*, avant-garde film makers have been using the image of the eye to draw attention to the use of the camera to paint a retinal image (Wees, 1992). The importance of the retinal image is the basis of the idea of 'the untutored eye', a term coined by Stan Brakhage. The untutored eye is unencumbered by the constraints of learned ways of seeing, but more like a child's eye, fascinated by distortion and blurred perspectives and mostly true to the actual act of seeing rather than filming. In making experimental films, Brakhage and others seek to see with the camera, not just through it (Wees, 1992).

> ...in the beginning, each of an audience thought himself the camera, attending a play or, toward the end of the purely camera career, being run over by the unedited filmic image of a locomotive which had once rushed straight at the lens, screaming when a revolver seemed fired straight out of the screen, motion picture being the original magic of the medium (Brakhage, 1980).

Brakhage himself has made great leaps in the cause of opening cinematic perception. With his films, he uses imagery to give a visual impression of events rather than to recount it. In *Anticipation of the Night*, Brakhage used shadows to illustrate the character of a protagonist camera man and moves through scenes of the night into the 'dream' of a child signifying his ultimate goal of seeing unencumbered by the preconceptions of adulthood and the role of the camera (Brakhage, 1958).

Mystery Train (Jim Jarmusch) *Meshes of the Afternoon* (Maya Deren)

linking experimentation

the threshold

In 1942, shortly after their marriage, Maya Deren and Alexander Hammid began collaborating on the film *Meshes of the Afternoon*. *Meshes of the Afternoon* presented an inspired cohesive new aesthetic. Though it was not that Deren and Hammid were necessarily weary of Hollywood pictures. 'In all likelihood Deren and Hammid were more conscious of the influence...of Orson Welles' then recent *Citizen Kane*, with its regular shifts of perspective, than of *Un Chien Andalou*' (Sitney, 1974). Yet they did use the very significant symbolism of the somnambulist. Cesare, the main character of Robert Weine's influential expressionist film *The Cabinet of Dr. Caligari*, was a somnambulist and though *Meshes of the Afternoon* contained this aspect, it transcended its predecessor by using the editing rather than the narrative to reflect this. The film is mostly shot in point-of-view to imitate the protagonist's movements as she (Maya Deren herself) dreams that she is being followed and has returned home only to find herself already there. And after becoming confused and tortured by the circumstance, she tries to kill her husband (played by Hammid) and eventually commits suicide or dreams she did (Deren, 1943). The film is often confusing with many shifts between objectivity and subjectivity, but the seamless editing and smooth camera work leave the viewer entranced and when the camera moves up to a mirror shot of Deren, it is hard to believe that her face is not your own.

Using techniques normally associated with narrative films has served to further change the viewer's perception of the cinematic experience, leaving the audience with a new interpretation of the capabilities of film art. Andy Warhol in particular was at the threshold of narrative and non-narrative American film making. With his films, he changed the perceptions of often mundane circumstances. In *Blow-Job*, he simply uses the face of a man being fellated, but never shows the activity. '[The] space is...displaced into an imagined focus of interest, twenty inches below the

frame, which the face actually on screen never for a moment lets us forget' (Koch, 1973). This technique lets the audience use their imagination, but it is also very graphic as opposed to pornographic. This changes their perception even of what erotic film or pornography is. Warhol's films ranged in degrees of narrative, but he never took a traditional documentary approach. He was in favour of leaving the camera alone and letting his actors act or sleep or whatever he decided to film (Evans, 1967). In this, he succeeded in making his films run in real (reel) time and let the audience in on the activity of time expenditure, positioning them in a 'hallucinated now' (Dixon, 1995) so that the premise of a pregnant drag queen, a pope shooting heroin, cleaning his needle with coca cola and slapping a whore, or gay cowboys teaching barmaids ballet seem almost real. It was a turn for the popularity of experimental techniques as well as a turn for the relation of the audience with the author of the films. The experience of attending a non-narrative film did not necessarily have to position them within their own subconscious but within a very surreal situation that is often so real in its presentation that it can reflect back the entire experience they are having.

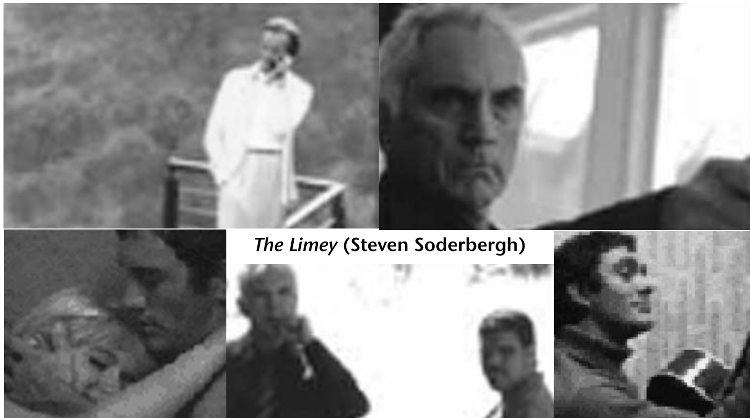
the narrative daydream

In the same way non-narrative films have used traditionally narrative structures, narrative motion pictures can often position the viewer in the 'reality' of a daydream where one can vacillate between self-absorption and self-abandonment. For ultimately, the spectator seeks 'the opportunity of drama rather than drama itself [and in cinema] one grasps it all' (Kracauer, 1960). As the entire cinematic experience centers around the illumination of images, any cinema that concentrates on the visuals over dialogue weakens the audience's consciousness. In narrative films, this daydream is much more likely to be a means of simply enhancing a realistic plot. For instance, director Stanley Kubrick often changed the pace, colour, and sound of his film to enhance the viewer's daydream. 1971's *A Clockwork Orange* begins with Alex the protagonist committing various acts of violence with his mates, but when he gets caught, theoretically, so does the audience. The pace slows, the soundtrack dissipates, and the colours go from very bright to quite grey (Kubrick, 1971). This incorporates more of the mental impulses for the viewer than had Kubrick simply kept the visuals more steadily paced.

In the last thirty years, non-narrative experimental techniques have become more prevalent in narrative films. David Lynch is possibly the most avant-garde film maker to have ever ventured into Hollywood productions. His first film *Eraserhead* (1976) was made on a very low budget and financed by the American Film Institute (Andrew, 1998). It is shot in very dark black and white and features John Nance as Henry, a man with a head of hair that stands up straight, who fathers a sea creature of a baby and during the baby's sickness becomes infatuated with a dancer that lives in his radiator. Turning the tables on the point-of-view technique, *Eraserhead* is very confrontational and contains several shots of people looking directly into the camera (Lynch, 1976). This unconventional fairytale led to the kind of cine-

ma that not only led the audience into a dream, but led them to believe the dream was very much real.

The experimentation in the '60's and '70's led to the inspiration for many recent experimental film makers. Combining the effects of non-narrative and narrative techniques has had a great effect on full length features in the past decade. In the next chapter, I will look closely at Steven Soderbergh's *The Limey* and explain Soderbergh's methods of relating more intimately with his audience.



The Limey (Steven Soderbergh)

remembering the limey

cinematic nostalgia

> One intriguing sign of insurrection is apparent in the wave of cinematic nostalgia for the '60's-not just for that era's spirit of social change, but for the bold experimentation so prevalent in its movies (Farber, 1999).

In 1999, Steven Soderbergh released *The Limey*, a film that blatantly engaged the viewer with both an unconventional narrative configuration and an homage to the cinematic icons and techniques of the 1960's and 70's. Yet Soderbergh does not presuppose the filmic knowledge of his audience, and the film continues to stand on its own as an inventive exploration into the visualisation of memory using film grammar.

The Limey uses the technique of cutting back and forth through the narrative to construct the memory of the main character, Wilson (played by Terence Stamp). Often using sound that would occur later in the film in an early scene or playing scenes multiple times before or after they happen and changing them slightly, Soderbergh makes one of the most complex narratives structures in recent cinema.

> At the heart of [Soderbergh's] style is a fascination with the way film editing can be used to manipulate time, to make it disappear into narrative ellipses, to double it with parallel montage, to elongate it by drawing out actions, to impregnate it with hope and memory by cutting in anticipated/imagined events (Kehr, 1999).

The main character is a just freed Cockney thief looking for answers to his questions about the circumstances of his daughter's recent death in Los Angeles. Soderbergh uses several self-reflexive techniques for this simple narrative. Footage from an actual 1960's Terence Stamp film, Ken Loach's *Poor Cow,* serve as the flashbacks. *Poor Cow* is a similarly fractured narrative in which Stamp plays a young Cockney thief (Loach, 1967). Though the story of *The Limey* is in no way a sequel to *Poor Cow*, the visualisation of Wilson's past with key points of *Poor Cow* encourages the

audience to enter more into the story as information is revealed by realising that the younger Terence Stamp is actually Terence Stamp in yet another film. One other major technique is the casting. *The Limey*'s cast includes American '60's icon, Peter Fonda, star of the early '70's cult film *Vanishing Point*, Barry Newman, *Mission:Impossible* co-star, Lesley Ann Warren, and Andy Warhol protegee, Joe Dallesandro (Soderbergh, 1999). Yet the two major players in the film are Stamp and Fonda, playing a smarmy record producer that happened to be the boyfriend of Wilson's daughter when she died. Stamp declares, 'What's so elegant about this movie is that by casting us, Steven's played into a whole collective memory. Fonda and I bring so much baggage' (Gordnier, 1999). Indeed, Stamp's association with crime and hardship in the realistic cinema of '60's London counterculture and Fonda's association with road-weary anti-establishment romanticism in cinema of '60's California counterculture bring to *The Limey* a consciousness of the past that only enhances the visual memory of its main character. Without driving the narrative, it informs the viewer with the sense of a very real history for each character. And by looking at some key scenes in the film, one can see how Soderbergh intended both Wilson's individual memory and the cultural collective memory to affect his audience.

you know 'im?

Peter Fonda's character, Terry Valentine, is a record producer who made his fortune in the 1960's and is now involved as a middleman for heroin traffickers. Early in the film, it is established that him and Wilson's daughter, Jenny, were lovers at the time of her death in a car crash. In the scene prior to Valentine's first appearance, Wilson visits the warehouse where men involved in the heroin trafficking are working. Wilson shoots and kills everyone except one young man. In close-up, Wilson yells to the man, 'Tell him I'm coming!' Before the end of that shot the audio goes to Valentine's voice questioning, 'Tell him I'm coming?' As the scene cuts to a wide shot of a man on a balcony, a voice responds in yet another tone, 'Tell *him* I'm coming.' The scene cuts to a medium shot of the man on the balcony as the conversation continues. 'Who?' 'Nobody knows' (Soderbergh, 1999).

> The spectator has a relation to style...Although we are seldom conscious of the fact, we tend to have expectations about style...If a character speaks, we expect to hear diegetic sound that is faithful to its source (Bordwell/Thompson, 1990).

In *The Limey*, Soderbergh plays with the audience's expectations by playing sound from other scenes. The start of the film is a black screen with an isolated soundtrack from the climax of the film where Wilson and Valentine meet. He pleads, 'Tell me. Tell me. Tell me about Jenny' (Soderbergh, 1999). This not only informs the viewer of the basic scenario in the film, but it also heightens the expectations of the viewer when the action actually occurs. '"Tell me," he says, "About Jenny"...is not just for information about his daughter's death, but for an understanding of the girl he hasn't seen in nine years. There is now a wall of time and silence between them' (Strick, 2000). In the case of Valentine's introduction and the introduction to the film, the sonic repetition is to stress the importance that at some point

Wilson will meet Valentine.

Having heard Wilson's warning three times in three different ways, Soderbergh leads the audience into the world of Terry Valentine. A beautiful young woman in a swimsuit walks through a huge house with gold records on one wall and a massive window in the other. The widow and the camera moving from in front of her to behind her to above her reflect the expanse of the house. The Hollies' song 'King Midas in Reverse' is playing in the background ('You wouldn't want to be me/Oh, I can assure you of that') and the series of cuts to follow are not unlike a movie trailer to introduce both the character of Terry Valentine and the star Peter Fonda. Soderbergh uses the lyrics of the song ('He's King Midas with a curse') to warn us of the danger in Valentine's character while playing shots that occur later in the film of Valentine smiling, smoking, drinking and flossing are capped off with a billboard of Fonda with the caption 'Member Since 64. Are You A Cardmember?' and a neon fire flickering underneath (Soderbergh, 1999).

Soderbergh has said that he enjoys the use of images reappearing in the film to have different messages (Soderbergh, 1999). In this sense, the character of Valentine is introduced as perhaps a bit out of touch, but certainly not unlikable. Later in the film, the shot of Valentine flossing his teeth is accompanied by a pompous monologue about the '60's which fleshes out his character ideals. Soderbergh sums it up by saying,

> 'There's [Wilson] whose dreams of himself were lost in prison and [Valentine] whose dreams were probably never even his own and he just took everybody else's and made money out of them' (Johnston, 1999).

By including the scene in this initial montage, Soderbergh is cluing in his audience to the importance of the future scene.

As 'King Midas in Reverse' fades out, Valentine and the young girl are having an exchange poolside. The girl has a very similar quality visually

to the earlier shots of Jenny causing perhaps an initial confusion about where the scene fits in the story. The girl is immediately introduced as Adhara. Valentine recalls that he recommended to her parents that she be named after a constellation, a certain '60's phenomenon. As soon as Valentine opens his mouth onscreen, there is an inclination to think of him as, if nothing else, eccentric, for having known his own girlfriend when she was embryonic.

By introducing Valentine slowly and in different ways before he actually speaks onscreen, the audience is forced to contemplate the type of person they are about to encounter in a more decisive way. Instead of declaring any definitive way of interpreting his character, Soderbergh feeds the audience bits of voice and scenes from later in the film that presented in promotional montage seem more like a trailer for its star than for the character. After hearing him question the declaration by Wilson, he is then lounging in his chair smiling and even in one clip, looking directly into the camera and greeting the audience warmly. Fonda himself said that the arch of his character's personality throughout the film encourages the viewer to find him likable so that as he reveals himself, the audience will be more convinced that he is deserving of Wilson's quest for revenge (Soderbergh, 1999).

'You're not specific enough to be a person. You're more like a vibe,' is what Adhara tells Valentine from the pool (Soderbergh, 1999).

> Has anybody ever come up with a better description of the amorphousness of Peter Fonda? The echoes of his father have never seemed stronger or more distant. Seeing Henry Fonda's smile...reincarnated in the immaculate snake Valentine is...unsettling to our movie memories (Taylor, 1999).

Though this statement is perfectly indicative of Valentine as he squirms and giggles insecurely through the conversation, it also contains layers of implications that tap into both cinema history and the ideals of '60's

counterculture. Similarly, the exploration of characters by Soderbergh created a distinct 'vibe' of each one through his inventive editing.

The exchange between Adhara and Valentine is brief and ends with Valentine ordering her out of the pool in a manner unlike that of a parent. In fact, she looks up at Valentine for much of the conversation in quiet adoration. As the film returns to the image of the man on the balcony, now in medium shot calling, 'Terry,' the camera then cuts back to a wide shot and a conversation between the man (Avery, Valentine's security consultant) and Valentine begins before the camera is on them (Soderbergh, 1999). The conversation is shot from behind the men and with Fonda looking over his shoulder constantly, like the audience is spying on them. Though none of this part of the film constructs an accurate account of Wilson's memory (though it could be speculative), Soderbergh replaces it with the audience's memory. When Avery mentions that the shooting in the warehouse was 'probably nothing', a wide shot of Wilson being dragged out and kicked refreshes the spectator's visual memory from a more voyeuristic angle than the original shot which was from the attacker's point-of-view. In changing the angles and perspectives of scenes, Soderbergh also begs the audience to question their own memory from having watched the scene and the memories of the characters displayed onscreen in a way that makes the viewer active in judgement.

In the introduction to Avery, his ability to condescend and talk Valentine through the events at the warehouse is apparent. Soderbergh likens Avery to 'an ex-wife that gets to see the parade of people your ex is involved with' (Soderbergh, 1999). The resentment is apparent and now Valentine is playing the child. When Avery assures Valentine, 'No one's gonna connect anyone to you,' there is a cut to a shot of Valentine's address sitting near Wilson's cigarettes and hotel keys, enhancing the viewer's memory as the conversation continues and again Avery says, 'He was yelling

and screaming something about, "Tell him I'm coming."' Valentine: 'Tell him I'm coming?' Avery: 'Tell *him* I'm coming.' Again the warning is heard three times and Avery continues to assure Valentine that no one can link the traffickers to him. When Valentine reflects that Jenny made the connection, the camera cuts to a visual of Jenny in the warehouse and the light is spread vertically (Soderbergh, 1999). Many of the flashback scenes to Jenny are lit this way. Similar to the idea of the untutored eye, it seems as if scene is through the haze of someone that has been crying heavily and the light spreads through the tears.

In overlapping sound and visuals, Soderbergh is compartmentalising the film in a somewhat linear fashion. Though the images and sound are sometimes pulled from different scenes, they are invariably relating to the same subject to replicate memory.

> [It is] almost as if he has shot the story fifteen different ways, and then edited the pieces together so that the dialogue and situations fit together linearly, but visually the characters are in different hemispheres, different worlds (Butterworth,1999).

Though considered quite cinematic, in its basic form, the approach is rather literary. In remembering events the way a character would, the viewer is even more entrenched in his own point-of view than if the film was shot in a literal point-of-view angle.

After a close-up of Valentine in contemplation, there is cut to his address on Wilson's nightstand again another cut to the warehouse where Wilson asks, 'Valentine? You know 'im?' Though Valentine is offscreen and the visuals are jumping around in time, the viewer is cued back into Wilson's memory of his initial ideas about Valentine with the haunting score. Jenny's friend, Eduardo, is recalling the times he met Valentine and Wilson is asking him questions like how long they were together. Though the conversation is fluid, it is actually taking place at their first meeting in Eduardo's house and in his car before the shooting. The common visual

thread of *The Limey* is Wilson in thought on an airplane. With Wilson's subtle reactions on the plane, he is recalling all of these events on another journey. The light stays on his mouth where he cracks a smile when recalling his interaction with Eduardo and his mouth clenches when he remembers asking for Terry Valentine in the warehouse (Soderbergh, 1999).

By constructing the narrative in this way, the audience now has a multi-layered idea of Valentine from many perspectives in an economical seven minutes (Soderbergh, 1999). From seeing his young girlfriend look up at him like a child from the pool and call him a 'vibe', hearing his security consultant appease him as if he is the child and remembering Eduardo's assessment and Wilson's reaction to it, the audience is more active in both the interpretation of the information and the attaining of it. Yet at the heart of *The Limey* is the way Soderbergh presents Wilson's relationship with his daughter.

...in increments

In gaining more information about Jenny when she was in Los Angeles, Wilson turns to her close friends. Her closest friend happened to be Elaine, a voice coach played by Lesley Ann Warren. After Avery hired hitmen to eliminate Wilson, a group of Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA) agents appear to rescue them. Soderbergh has called *The Limey* 'Alain Resnais making *Get Carter*' (Soderbergh, 1999). In technique, *The Limey* mimics the multiplicity of perspectives and nostalgic tangibility of Alain Resnais' work (Resnais, 1955). In plot, *The Limey* is as simple as the quest for answers to a family death and the consequent revenge in *Get Carter* (Hodges, 1971). Yet Soderbergh gives the viewer a more complete narrative in allowing Wilson a chance to express the intensity of his bond with Jenny.

The scene begins as Wilson and Elaine are pushed by one of the agents into a garage space at an airplane hangar. Wilson hands Elaine a DEA badge he stole on the car ride to the garage. Elaine immediately becomes annoyed with Wilson's adeptness as a criminal, and it cuts to the two of them across the room from one another. Elaine asks, 'Do you even remember the last time you saw [Jenny]?' To this Wilson replies matter-of-factly, 'I remember every time I saw her. I watched her grow up...' He pauses and smirks before saying, '...in increments' (Soderbergh, 1999). This is as true of Wilson's experiences as it is of the viewers as Wilson prompts a series of flashbacks.

The sound that often accompanies Wilson's flashbacks of the young Jenny is the sound of wind chimes and Wilson humming 'Colours' by Donovan. The wind chimes occur in real time at the end of the film. They are actually outside a motel in Big Sur where Wilson is staying the night he finally confronts Valentine. The song is used as the last bit of footage in *The Limey*. It is actually sung by the younger Terence Stamp in *Poor Cow*. Using the song in this way bridges the gap between *The Limey*

and *Poor Cow* since the only flashback scene that is played with sound is 'Colours' at the end (Soderbergh, 1999). Using these sounds to accompany Wilson's memory of Jenny places the audience in Wilson's mind as he hums a song thinking about her. Though Wilson is an outlaw, and he has committed several murders at this point in the film, Soderbergh lets the viewer become intimately acquainted with his love for Jenny, increasing their sympathy and feeling for Wilson.

As the flashback sequence begins with a shot of a young Jenny on the beach, Elaine says, 'She said you were a ghost in her life.'
Again the light is spread vertically and there is light from a mirror illuminating the bottom part of Jenny's face to emphasize her expression in much the way that Wilson is lit on the plane, establishing a certain visual similarity that would not be present otherwise. It is almost as if Jenny was a ghost in his life as well, since Stamp's character in *Poor Cow* did not have a daughter (Loach, 1967), a young girl is edited into these sequences and the two are never in a shot together. The scenes give the impression that Jenny witnessed much of Wilson's illegal behaviour. During this sequence, Wilson explains that Jenny understood that he was a thief when she was a girl, and then all that is heard is his humming 'Colours' and the chimes in Big Sur (Soderbergh, 1999). The poignancy of his memory is magnified by the song connecting the time and space of the two films. Soderbergh leaves in the ambient noise from the airplane hangar to keep the time grounded for the viewer, but the could be indicative of both the DEA airplane hangar or the airplane trip he is referenced in for most of the film. The only lyrics sung being 'Freedom is a word I rarely use without thinking of the time when I was loved' is reflective of his emotional freedom when Jenny was alive and his literal feeling of freedom before he was jailed for the last time before she died.

After the images of *Poor Cow*, the sound fades back into just

ambient noise and one of the most important images in the film appears for the first time. Jenny as a young girl threatening to call the police on her father. Wilson relays the story in a jocular manner yet the light in the scene is spread vertically and there is a cut to Wilson in the airplane and he looks thoughtful and sad as the light moves slowly down his face. Elaine slowly becomes more sympathetic to Wilson and says that Jenny would have never turned him in. He then tells her that Jenny had a feeling about the length of time Wilson would get put in jail for and that 'she said she wouldn't be there this time when I got out.' As he pauses, the scene cuts to the back of his head on the airplane. 'And she wasn't.' Before the DEA agent returns and the scene ends, Elaine and Wilson look at each other sadly and a bond between them is finally established (Soderbergh, 1999).

The image of Jenny on the phone is resurrected in the final scene between Wilson and Valentine when he realises that her inclination towards calling the authorities on the men she loved is precisely what got her killed (Soderbergh, 1999). ***The Limey*'s strength is that it places multiple meanings on the same incidents or sounds by simply repeating them at different points and this gives the viewer a more active and thoughtful response to the characters and events in the film. Though there is a sadness to Wilson's recollections of Jenny in this scene, there is also fun in the joke of Jenny threatening to call the police and a quiet sentimentality to his humming of 'Colours'. In editing it back at the end of the film, the viewer has a more complete emotional response to the relation of Wilson's memories and his indirect responsibility for her death. In this way, Soderbergh successfully uses self-reflexive techniques to portray the transient quality that is inherent in memory as it changes with circumstance.**

conclusion

> It is often in retrospect th at we can identify the characters as hero, false hero, etc. and interpret the significance of each scene in light of its place in the total structure (Culler, 1975).

The Limey is certainly a film to be looked at several times. Its intricate structure can make viewing the film very confusing and perhaps the question of heroes and false heroes seems unclear. Yet, upon looking closer, it is clear that this confusion is both intentional and very realistic. In becoming acquainted with human nature, the same confusion is often never resolved more than our own subjective memories can allow. History repeats itself for Wilson, his daughter, Jenny, and for the viewer, and this resonates more powerfully than the plot itself.

In looking at experimental film technique, it was obvious that there is often a conflict for the experimental film maker to communicate clearly.

> We assume that setting, character, movement, and character position will be consistent and coherent. Our prior filmic conventions lets us form strong expectations about what shot will follow what we are seeing (Bordwell/Thompson, 1990).

In *The Limey*, Soderbergh chose to focus on character and memory, not the conventional narrative. By mixing narrative and non-narrative ideals, *The Limey* gives the impression that it may have never actually happened. Questioning the reality of the cinematic experience has led me to look at different ways of communicating with the spectator. Beyond narrative and film grammar, there is a way of integrating human conduct and physiology to make the viewer's experience more tangible. Critical reviews of *The Limey* were often split, but the impression on the reviewer was clear. One reviewer says of Wilson, 'Although he ultimately fails, unlike other tortured heroes, Wilson does not react, he acts' (Divine, 2000). Though Wilson's motivation was a reaction to circumstance, the reviewer emphasizes the active in response to the way the character is presented as 'both judge and jury'

(Divine, 2000). Here, Soderbergh taps into the daydream of being Wilson's character, and incorporates a non-narrative technique to engage the spectator.

Experimentalism has always been associated with dream structures. The film maker can utilize the images and thoughts that enter our daily reality and bring new meaning to their relation. This is possible because the camera 'is capable of imitating all mental impulses, whether as simple as a shifting gaze or as complex as a sudden hallucination' (Tyler, 1960 and 1967). The daydream is a voluntary opportunity to meander into the subconscious areas of the mind and in experimenting with its grammar and relation to the camera, the film maker is also experimenting with the audience.

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