Giuseppe Tornatore



Giuseppe Tornatore
Emotion, Cognition, Cinema

By

William Hope



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This volume is dedicated to my grandmother, Lucy May Holden.

INTRODUCTION

In recent years, the concept of film directors as *auteurs* has been called into question by a number of writers and critics who have expressed legitimate doubts as to the validity of interpreting a director's stylistic mannerisms, repetitive idiosyncrasies, and use of genre *données* as evidence of an invariant personal vision. Noel Carroll and Berys Gaut have also drawn attention to the fact that most modern feature films are multiply authored and that they are the artistic result of a creative and financial collective including screenwriters, actors, technicians, cinematographers, composers, and producers, as well as the director.[1] In the context of mainstream Hollywood films that feature A-list actors and which are financed by major production studios, any attempt to ascribe overall creative control to a particular individual is clearly fallacious. Paisley Livingston's analogy in which a team leader shows building plans to a group of co-workers, ensures that they grasp the overall scheme, and then asks for suggestions regarding the realization of the artistic blueprint, is perhaps a more realistic reflection of the maximum extent of a director's influence in the elaboration of many modern film projects.[2] The term *auteurism*–the idea of the director-as-author–was coined in the 1950s by François Truffaut and by other contributors to the journal *Cahiers du cinéma*. The concept evolved in an attempt to confer a sense of *gravitas* upon film and film-makers, making them into valid subjects for critical and theoretical study, and, by implication, the contributors to *Cahiers* also sought to encourage European directors to emulate the more technically sophisticated Hollywood releases. Nowadays, the term "auteur" tends to be applied to directors who have maintained a discernible aesthetic or thematic approach over a sustained period of time–something which, in the light of market forces and commercial pressures, is itself often difficult to achieve.

In the context of modern Italian cinema, the films of Giuseppe Tornatore are characterized by high production values, a visual style that combines the experimental with the aesthetically polished, and by their intimately subjective, lyrical, and often emotionally compelling narratives. They are films that arguably constitute an art form not dissimilar to the concept of refined yet progressive film-making outlined by Truffaut and his colleagues, and the director's particular vision of the cinematic experience has evolved into a trademark style that is instantly recognizable, and sometimes denoted by the neologism *tornatoriano* in critical circles.[3] The tenability of the anti-auteurism

arguments evinced by Carroll and Gaut with reference to the impossibility of any one individual enjoying creative control over a film, is problematized in the case of Tornatore. Besides directing and writing the screenplays for his films, he formed his own production company, *Sciarlò*, in 1991. Early in his career, he established a team of trusted technicians, composers, and actors to actualize the distinct world view that emerges in his work. Significantly, Tornatore assumes an integral role at every stage of the casting process, and also enjoys a considerable degree of financial freedom from the studios that back his projects. In thematic terms, his films are distinguished by their exploration of the sociocultural legacy of the past, and the way it frequently overshadows and influences not only the present, but also the lives of individuals whose growing awareness of a sense of personal loss shapes their behaviour and infuses their existences with pathos.

Tornatore's first feature film, *Il camorrista*/*The Professor* (1986), was a stylized portrayal of the rise and fall of a Neapolitan mafia boss, a character whose existential trajectory and acquisitional fervour are largely determined by the poverty of his upbringing, and he is also conditioned by witnessing the ways in which individuals gain self-empowerment through their mafia links. The acclaimed *Nuovo Cinema Paradiso*/*Cinema Paradiso* (1988), a meditation on the declining sociocultural importance of cinema within a Sicilian community, earned Tornatore an Academy Award for Best Foreign Film. The theme of individuals detaching themselves from the present to reminisce over more fulfilling former lifestyles emerged in *Stanno tutti bene*/*Everybody's Fine* (1990), the film offering a poignant portrait of the fragmentation of family life in modern Italy, as experienced by an elderly widower (Marcello Mastroianni). Even in the director's short, comic contribution to the episodic film *La domenica specialmente*/*Especially on Sunday* (1991), the predominant mood is that of nostalgia and regret, as Tornatore's segment, *Il cane blu* / *The Blue Dog*, explores the idiosyncratic bond between a stray dog and a misanthropic barber. *Una pura formalità*/*A Pure Formality* (1994), a psychological thriller with a supernatural twist, constituted a radical departure from Tornatore's earlier work. Nevertheless, there were thematic analogies with his previous films in the way Onoff (Gérard Depardieu), a novelist accused of murder, is compelled to reflect upon pivotal moments in his life while under interrogation.

With *L'uomo delle stelle*/*The Star Maker* (1995), Tornatore's creative focus returned to 1950s Sicily in a colourful evocation of the island as experienced by Joe Morelli, a charlatan who claims to be a talent scout from the *Cinecittà* studios in Rome. It is a narrative whose poignancy hinges on Morelli's encounter with a young girl, Beata, and the way in which destiny conspires to deprive him of her redemptive influence. *La leggenda del pianista sull'oceano*/*The Legend of 1900* (1998) was Tornatore's adaptation of

Alessandro Baricco's monologue *Novecento*/*Nineteen Hundred*, a tale concerning an enigmatic pianist who gains international acclaim without ever leaving the confines of the ocean liner that is his home. This is another narrative which is essentially an extended, wistful flashback portraying the life of the film's narrator, a musician called Max Tooney, who reminisces fondly over this, the most exhilarating period of his existence. *Malèna* (2000) again signalled a return to Sicily in the mid-twentieth century, and was an evocative portrayal of the formative years of Renato Amoroso, a teenager whose emotional and sexual awakenings coincide with the decline and collapse of Fascism. Tornatore has therefore come to be associated with films that have been loosely categorized as "nostalgic", because as well as being tendentially retrospective in temporal and thematic terms, the affective impact of his work is also reminiscent of Classical Hollywood Cinema at its most melodramatic, a quality which occasionally borders on the sentimentality of the silent era.

Tornatore's films are constructed around aesthetic and narrative mechanisms that are designed to elicit substantial emotional responses from spectators, and this is an artistic approach which runs counter to contemporary cinematic trends that privilege forms of reception based on an ironic (self-)awareness of the process of producing and consuming films. Indeed, the conscious appeal to the sentiments of today's cinemagoers that is inherent in much of the director's work arguably constitutes a far riskier artistic strategy than any of the calculatedly subversive and controversial exercises in stretching the boundaries of cinematic form and content that have materialized over the past decade. If consideration is given to articles such as Patrick Rumble's account of the reception of *Nuovo Cinema Paradiso* in America and Canada, and the way in which screenings of the film induced a number of unexpectedly intense collective emotional responses by reawakening a sense of tradition, community, and family, then it is not hyperbolic to suggest that there is something intrinsically radical about the manner in which this particular film questions many of the fundamental tenets of people's lifestyles in contemporary Western capitalist society.[4] The uniqueness of Tornatore's work resides in the way his films induce powerful affective reactions within viewers while a second, markedly more cerebral level of engagement is simultaneously elicited, an intellectual form of viewer participation which invites reflection on issues ranging from the fate of individuals in the postmodern societies of the late twentieth century, to the implications of the unrestricted voyeurism that has already become an engrained characteristic of early twenty-first century culture. In turn, the spectator's cognizance of these issues conflates with the affective impact of the diegetic action, rather than reducing it, to produce a viewing experience that simultaneously engages and elicits both emotional and intellectual responses.

Modern film-making has evolved into an increasingly self-conscious enterprise, a form of artistic creation that tends to feature stylized and often overstated visual and aural approaches which foreground the presence of the film's creator in an arch and sometimes self-referential way. Such techniques constitute an effective way of making bold aesthetic statements while simultaneously providing an in-built defence mechanism of ironic detachment to enable films to withstand the dissective scrutiny of today's blasé and worldly-wise cinemagoers. Heavily indexed film devices ranging from obtrusive soundtrack music with strong socio-historical connotations to arresting visual techniques such as disorienting camera angles and visceral close-ups, make an initial affective impact on spectators but then subsequently draw the viewer's attention away from the confines of the deictic space. Depending on whether or not one subscribes to the notion of auteurism, it might be posited that the viewer's engagement with the film is diverted from its intra-diegetic action to the individual aesthetic or thematic agenda of its director. Alternatively, non-auteurist viewpoints might suggest that the viewer's sensitized, extra-diegetic perspective is conducive to a greater awareness of the broader historical, cultural, and sociological factors that conditioned the creation and reception of the film. But regardless of the interpretation of this conspicuous and sometimes conspiratorial cinematic self-awareness, it is a mechanism which is designed to attenuate any mimetic and realistic qualities that the work may possess.

Within twentieth century art, the aesthetic approaches promulgated initially by Bertolt Brecht and others–techniques that were further developed for the medium of cinema by writer/directors such as Jean-Luc Godard–consciously eschewed notions of realism in favour of systematically dismantling and reassembling individual works to expose the artifice and also the manipulative potential of art. Through the deployment of techniques variously labelled as "distancing" or "alienating" effects, the tendencies of spectators to indulge in empathic identification with protagonists or to elaborate predictive schemata with regard to narrative development were repeatedly interrupted and confounded. With regard to cinema, this self-conscious, deconstructive approach to film-making formed a counter current to mainstream cinema with its generic orthodoxy and visual structures that were designed to elicit spectatorial empathy and to sustain the illusion of realism. In recent decades, however, the two different strands of film-making have tended to intersect with increasing frequency. It is a phenomenon that has been engendered by factors including the absorption of innovative young directors into the cinematic mainstream, an almost inevitable career trajectory for film-makers who want their work to transcend national boundaries, and who calculate that the benefits of working on projects financed and distributed by the global corporations who control much of the market, outweigh possible disadvantages such as reduced

artistic autonomy. In turn, genre-based mainstream feature films have tended to become less formulaic and more cutting-edge by incorporating the aesthetic and narrative values of "art" cinema.

The transplantation of the mechanisms and aesthetic approaches of independent film-making into mainstream cinema, including the techniques of viewer distancing referred to earlier, has sometimes led to their banalization within commercial films. Whereas previously such devices would be deployed as part of a coherent and ongoing intellectual agenda to which the viewer's attention would be periodically directed during a film, the use of similar strategies within commercial, high-budget releases directed by individuals such as Quentin Tarantino–artists whose work features a distinctive style and world view which, in some contexts, might be termed auteurist–almost invariably results in a spiralling proliferation of self-conscious signifiers. The majority of these visual and aural citations emanate from a signified which is constituted either by cinematic history itself or even by the stylistic proclivities of antecedent works by the director in question. In intellectual terms, however, the end result is little more than a sterile exercise in self-referentiality. In contemporary mainstream cinema, it is increasingly uncommon to encounter a body of work in which identifiable, intellectual "macro-frames" are elaborated,[5] films which articulate sociocultural issues with the aim of eliciting a degree of cogitation from viewers; it is even rarer to find such qualities successfully combined with a profound affective charge reminiscent of films from eras such as that of Classical Hollywood Cinema, without the emotional impact of the diegetic action being vitiated.

While art has, for centuries, been inextricably linked with the eliciting of emotion during its reception–thinking which primarily emerged from Platonic and Aristotelian concepts of the cathartic qualities of tragedy and the way in which the pity and fear of the spectator were purged after exposure to certain art forms–Cartesian philosophy served to reinforce the idea that the emotions and the intellect were irreconcilable domains. Emotions were thought to be innately irrational impulses that adversely conditioned an individual's capacity for reasoned thinking, and within the artistic sphere, this perspective lingered well into the twentieth century. Writers such as Adorno and Brecht condemned art which aspired to a realist aesthetic, since a prolonged consumption of these forms of art by audiences led to a putative reduction in their ability to distinguish reality from illusion, and also to a subsequent weakening of their critical faculties. It is only in relatively recent times that research has been conducted into the ways in which viewers process and react to the visual fiction with which they engage while watching films, and several studies contend that the spectator's emotive and cognitive processes are interlinked during such experiences. Theoretical models delineating these processes have emerged from

the field of film studies and also from disciplines as diverse as cognitive science, physiology, and narrative theory. Indicative of these perspectives is the work of Torben Grodal whose volume *Moving Pictures* provides a detailed overview of the ways in which different film genres activate the perceptions, cognitions, emotions, and memories of viewers, the cinematic fiction cueing a mental simulation of possible responses (psychological and/or physiological, for example) to specific scenarios, reactions that are based on the viewer's real-life experiences. Murray Smith, Noel Carroll, Carl Plantinga, Greg M. Smith, and Richard Allen have also made important contributions in terms of developing this branch of film studies,[6] and although each critic has used slightly different theoretical starting points to analyse the manner in which individuals receive, process, and react to visual and aural information while viewing a film, the general consensus is that the Cartesian division between mind and body does not recognize the way in which an individual's cognitive faculties and emotions tend to work together. Plantinga and Smith suggest that "Emotions and cognitions cooperate to orient us in our environment and to make certain objects more salient. Emotions help us to evaluate our world and react to it more quickly. Fear or love provides a motive force that more often than not works in tandem with thought processes."[7]

There are multiple parallels between the ways in which individuals engage with scenes in a fiction film and the manner in which they respond to real-life situations. Both experiences engage the individual's senses through sound and vision; the events unfold within an ongoing temporal continuum, the developing action inducing individuals to predict likely outcomes and to formulate personal preferences for specific turns of events. Fictional simulations of reality tend to trigger the same cognitive and affective processes within an individual that s/he uses to assess the nature of scenarios in everyday life, and sometimes the same physiological reactions, such as palpitations or sweating, are induced. As Grodal puts it, viewing experiences create "a mental flow from perception via emotional evaluation and cognitions to enaction."[8] Autonomic reactions may result from the individual's involvement with many different kinds of virtual reality, as passive viewers of sporting events might testify. Although viewers may be ensconced in their armchairs, following a football match on a flickering television screen, their emotional evaluation of the desirability of preventing the ball from rolling out of play–perhaps to provide a team with a final scoring opportunity–coupled with a rapid cognitive assessment of the degree of physical effort and speed required from a nearby player to achieve this, may induce an involuntary reflex reaction in the viewer's lower leg. In effect, the same evaluative processes are set in motion within the spectator as those experienced by a footballer on the field of play, and for the former, this may result in an

autonomic response based on his/her projected assessment that it will require a full-length lunge to prevent the ball from going into touch.

Grodal argues that the cognitive skills of humans have an evolutionary origin, based on the fact that it is easier to obtain sustenance and avoid danger if we have "precise cognitive maps of the world".[9] In real life, individuals use their senses to evaluate the nature of a given object, or configuration of objects, initially in order to determine whether any threat is posed to the individual's existence by the object in question, and perhaps subsequently to establish whether a greater proximity to the object might be to the individual's advantage. Even evaluative processes as basic as these are driven by a combination of cognitive and affective processes, the mind initially ascertaining an object's innate characteristics, an evaluation which in turn induces emotional reactions such as fear or desire. In turn, the individual may experience physiological responses such as an increased heart rate, and may take evasive action if the object is deemed, for example, to constitute a threat. For many of the theorists who have analysed the affective and cognitive engagement of spectators with cinematic fiction, there is an underlying assumption that the emotions elicited during the course of a viewing experience emanate from the same bodily and mental processes that generate emotions in real life. Cognitive philosophers such as Gregory Currie have suggested that the viewer's experience of fictions leads to a form of mental simulation, a similar process to empathic responses in everyday life; if we observe others in given situations and possess the sensitivity to evaluate the nature of what is happening to the other person, we may briefly assume the feelings and perspectives that we imagine they might be experiencing. However, in Currie's words, these feelings are experienced "offline", as they are "disconnected from their normal perceptual inputs and behavioural outputs".[10] These sensations may also be experienced by the film viewer in a weakened or diluted form, and their intensity may fluctuate as the viewer's involvement with the film oscillates between a direct emotional engagement with the diegetic action–leading to instantaneous physiological responses–and a more detached contemplation of the film's events through the filter of a macro-frame and the intellectual agenda that it may contain. Nevertheless, as Plantinga and Smith state, when the mental processes of film viewers simulate the thoughts of others,

> Such simulations retain belief-like connections to other mental states and to the body, in part accounting for the emotional power of movies despite our knowledge that they represent fictional characters and situations. This can also account for the benefits of fiction; fictions allow us to exercise our capacities for mental simulation, and thus have adaptive significance.[11]

The study of the emotions of film viewers from a cognitive perspective, an approach according to which emotion is a combination of feelings, physiological reactions, and cognitive evaluations elicited by given objects, is a mode of analysis which has firm links to the way individuals respond to similar scenarios in real life. Cognitive philosophy and psychology constitute a concrete framework within which to analyse the ways in which different components of a film, such as its aesthetics or narrative structure, are designed to elicit certain forms of engagement from viewers. It is a framework that is more tangible than the psychoanalytical approaches which defined the nature of emotions and affect within film studies for decades, the weaknesses of which have been evidenced by Grodal, Plantinga, Smith, and others.[12] As Grodal points out, we view visual fictions in a conscious state, and the narratives normally concern "human beings perceiving, acting, and feeling in, or in relation to, a visible and audible world", in a "symbolically real time-space".[13] Logically, therefore, the cognitive and emotional processes elicited within us while viewing a film should be analysed in relation to our conscious mental states and processes, rather than being linked speculatively to unconscious drives and desires. Grodal proposes that since visual fictions are moulded around anthropomorphic mental structures such as processes of empathy, models of intentions, and goal-directed acts, their narratives also eliciting similar perceptions, emotions, cognitions, and reactions to those experienced in life, it is more appropriate to analyse the viewer's mental processing of film scenes on this same basis.[14]

The visual and aural impact of film elicits perceptions, emotions, and cognitive evaluations from viewers in ways that parallel scenarios in everyday life, but within cinematic art, with its set durations and aesthetic artifice, they often emerge in a condensed and intensified form. As Plantinga and Smith indicate, the function of cinematic narration is not limited to the role of communicating narrative information to viewers; films are also constructed to guide audiences through sequences of emotional reactions via a stream of stylistic cues.[15] For example, the emotional information that emerges from the facial expressions and reactions of screen characters reflects the visual communication that derives from the interpersonal contact that viewers experience on a daily basis. However, the body language used by actors in their performances constitutes a mode of emotional expression which, unlike in real life, may be visually emphasized by camera proximity and angle, and therefore specific sequences of screen emotion can serve the pivotal function of establishing, reinforcing, or recasting a film's emotional climate. Soundtrack music also possesses a range of expressive qualities, and is another device that can augment the intensity of the viewing experience if used in conjunction with, rather than in contraposition to, a film's images. Specific types of narrative genre or pattern, via the cognitive evaluations that they elicit from viewers, will

also draw particular kinds of responses. For instance, canonical, goal-based, adventure narratives resemble–in cognitive terms–the future-oriented linearity of everyday existence, and they induce what Grodal terms "telic, enactive responses" from viewers, tense reactions that are linked to the goal-directed nature of the acts taking place within the screen diegesis. By contrast, genres such as melodrama tend to feature protagonists who are more passive and acted upon, characters who have "a reduced ability to perform voluntary, telic, mental or physical acts […] The enactive deficit leads to paratelic or autonomic response."[16] In other words, this signifies that in the absence of any tangible, realizable goal, the viewer focuses on the repetitive, process-oriented nature of the actions, and empathic identification with the passive protagonist's inability to alter the course of events may trigger bodily responses such as crying.

Film fiction contains a range of visual and aural stimuli which, in themselves, may elicit cognitive and affective responses from viewers, or alternatively a film's broader thematic remit may create a form of resonance within the memories of viewers. In the case of the global success of *Nuovo Cinema Paradiso*, it can be observed that certain films possess a transcultural significance that strikes a chord on an international scale, and this particular film exemplifies the way in which the affective and intellectual components of Tornatore's work reinforce and complement each other. Tornatore's films are structured in such a way that the affective and cognitive responses elicited from audiences by the director's articulation of the diegetic action are intensified by the film's intellectual focus, or macro-frame, through which the action is viewed. It has already been argued that such frames or filters often infuse modern day films with a tangible self-consciousness, occasionally diverting a spectator's attention from diegetic events to a didactic intellectual agenda, or more frequently towards a redundant self-referentiality or to otiose intertextualities. While Tornatore's work is also distinguished by a sense of artistic self-awareness, this is a characteristic which stems from the discernible objective of inviting reflection on a range of issues affecting contemporary society, and it educes viewing experiences that conflate both emotional and intellectual responses. Tornatore's own use of frames elicits a cognizance of salient historical, cultural, and sociological issues, an awareness of which immediately feeds back into the viewer's reception and emotional/cognitive processing of the diegetic events, intensifying their import. It is the aim of this volume to discuss and illustrate the ways in which Tornatore's cinema successfully integrates the affect and emotion of what, in Brechtian terms, might be dismissed as "illusionistic" art, within intellectual frameworks whose significance is accentuated, rather than diminished, by being interlinked with the narrative, visual, and aural devices deployed by the director.

In *Il camorrista*/*The Professor*, two distinct sociological phenomena form the backdrop to the film's events. The activities of the notorious Neapolitan mafia boss Raffaele Cutolo provide the diegetic action with a specific context, and the film's evocation of Cutolo's existential trajectory develops into a wider socio-political discourse highlighting the task faced by the forces of order when state institutions have been systematically infiltrated by organized crime. Within this framework, the film's affective charge draws on elements including the desire of viewers for a sense of community and neighbourhood solidarity that no longer exists, and through its narrative structure, camera work, and montage, the film aligns viewers with the leaders of a Neapolitan mafia clan, the Professor and his sister Rosaria. These attachments prove to be insidious as even Rosaria's scruples are eroded by the escalating gang warfare. Consequently, the viewer's projected cognitive schemes regarding the development of Rosaria's character are dashed by a film during which any transitory attachment to the principal figures leads to a sense of estrangement. As viewers revert to their everyday value systems at the end of the film, a sense of moral debasement lingers after their mental simulation of the thought processes of *mafiosi*. This strategy serves a didactic function, reinforcing the link between the specificity of the action and the film's broader theoretical agenda which seeks the creation of state institutions whose values are worthy of the trust of its citizens.

Nuovo Cinema Paradiso/*Cinema Paradiso* is structured around a sociocultural macro-frame within which the fate of cinema in an age of television and video is explored, and the film examines the implications of the decline of the medium upon communities for whom the local cinema was a fulcrum of social cohesion. Through this particular optic, the film's flashback structure restricts the development of characters and of the narrative itself, and without a sense of goal-oriented linear time within the film, the viewer's cognitive faculties and desire for enactive access–for some form of intervention to influence the course of events, as might occur in real life–are rarely activated, and the narrative becomes suffused with melancholy. This atmosphere is heightened by Tornatore's use of faded photographs and vintage film clips within the *mise-en-scène*, both of which evoke an age whose values have long since disappeared. The portrayal of Totò Di Vita's adult lifestyle in late 20th century Italy is visually bleak, and Ennio Morricone's lush soundtrack is all but removed from these scenes, depriving them of the emotional plenitude that the music brings to the sequences of Totò's childhood. This is a period in the character's existence during which Tornatore develops a sense of nostalgia that transcends Totò's wartime Sicilian upbringing to connect with the experiences of any viewer who has witnessed the destruction of familiar landmarks, or who feels a sense of unease at the postmodern tendency to efface the past. In structural terms, this is how the film's personalized diegetic events are closely

linked to its sociocultural discourses. In addition, the film also offers visual articulations of the ways in which audiences process visual fiction, foregrounding phenomena such as emotional contagion in scenes where the Cinema Paradiso audience weep in unison during a melodrama, and flinch as a consequence of the autonomic impulses induced by horror films.

The sociological theoretical framework of *Stanno tutti bene*/*Everybody's Fine* oscillates between the societal and the personal, and represents modern Italy as a postmodern dystopia typified by a disintegrating rapport between image and meaning. The *mise-en-scène* of urban environments evokes Baudrillard's vision of a society dominated by the media, technology, and telecommunications, and the film encourages reflection on the fate of individuals within such societies in its portrayal of the sons and daughters of the Sicilian protagonist, Matteo Scuro, all of whom have been subsumed into the mechanisms of late-capitalist society. This distinctly cerebral theoretical foundation for the film coalesces into a series of stark visual revelations about the nature of modern society, as the narrative follows the experiences of the overbearing Matteo as he descends unannounced on his offspring who live in the urban metropolises of mainland Italy. Through a multiplicity of point-of-view (POV) shots, shot/reverse shots, and sequences where Matteo's sight line is centred on the camera lens as he reacts to the chaotic environments he visits, the film elicits empathic attachments on the part of viewers towards the character, and also generates perceptual, affective, and motivational identification with him, all of which offer insights into his mental processes. However, these emotional responses are interlinked with moments that repeatedly induce a more detached, "acentral" imagining on the part of viewers, and which reconnect the diegetic action with the film's theoretical remit.[17] These moments are generally cued by the excesses of Matteo's imagination–by his tendency, for example, to visualize his offspring both as children and as adults. While giving viewers a startling impression of the perceptions of the elderly, this overdetermined subjectivity provides perceptual "jolts" which serve to knit the film's affective and intellectual components together.

Il cane blu/*The Blue Dog*, Tornatore's contribution to the episodic film *La domenica specialmente*/*Especially on Sunday*, explores the way in which humour, while not being an emotion itself, may trigger a strong affective release within spectators at given moments. This thirty minute film instrumentalizes concepts of humour ranging from the tension-relief theory, a cathartic process whereby laughter is derived from the easing of stressful situations, to the incongruity-resolution theory, which engages the viewer's intellect as humour evolves from unexpected solutions to cognitive challenges.[18] This tale of the comic absurd, portraying the attempts of Amleto–an irascible barber–to rid himself of the attentions of a stray dog with a curious stain on its forehead, also

possesses a certain intellectual appeal on account of its self-conscious foregrounding of different comic styles ranging from slapstick to the sentimentality of the silent era, Tornatore being an avowed admirer of classic film comedy. The frequency with which these styles are emphasized, together with the overstated nature of devices such as the film's highly expressive soundtrack, suggests that the film knowingly showcases the techniques used by directors to elicit emotional responses from viewers during the zenith of Classical Hollywood Cinema and other golden eras of world cinema. In the light of the previous sociocultural agenda of *Nuovo Cinema Paradiso*, and given that *La domenica specialmente* dates from a similar period in Tornatore's *oeuvre*, it may be argued that the film is more than a mere exercise in cinematic self-consciousness, and that it touches on the same concerns as those of *Nuovo Cinema Paradiso*, inviting reflection on the changing ways in which films are created and received, and highlighting the importance of cinema's sociocultural legacy.

Una pura formalità/*A Pure Formality,* a tale of the interrogation of the novelist Onoff by a superintendent who accuses him of murder, illustrates the way in which detective narratives possess a two-way momentum, eliciting a cognitive fascination for viewers in their retrospective impetus–as clues are pieced together to form an account of events–and possessing an affective charge in their forward momentum as viewers share the discoveries of detectives during investigations. Such narratives allow viewers to make cognitive projections as to the likely development of the plot, these being based on the foregrounding of information early in the narrative, whose saliency only becomes apparent in its closing phases. Another ingredient often required for crime fiction to be successful is some degree of attachment to the representatives of law and order, who constitute a reassuring reference point as viewers are immersed into a world of crime. *Una pura formalità*, however, deliberately frustrates viewers both cognitively and affectively, partly as a consequence of the film's modernist approach towards characterization, with both protagonists being bereft of reliable personality traits and possessing an aggressive streak which deters attachments towards them. In cognitive terms, traditional filmic clues, such as the indexing of key objects by the camera, also defy interpretation. However, the film's denouement–followed by a second viewing of the film–reveals that there are enough hints to indicate that *Una pura formalità* should be viewed both as a metaphorical meditation on the enigma of artistic creativity, and as an ironic evaluation of the bizarre "narrative contracts" which evolve between the purveyors and consumers of detective fiction, a genre in which the simplicity of the denouement is outweighed by the cognitive effort made by the reader/viewer to reach it. Reassessed through the filter of this particular intellectual macro-frame, the film reveals its structural and thematic diversity from Tornatore's

other work, and also a deep awareness of the ways in which viewers process certain genres of fiction.

L'uomo delle stelle/*The Star Maker* also reveals a profound awareness of the way viewers engage with genres of film that are traditionally associated with realist aesthetics. It consciously reproduces the stylistic conventions of documentary and neorealist works in which authentic individuals and situations are captured by the camera but then assembled together into a form of narrative which confers a layer of artifice upon them. With its use of non-professional actors, Sicilian dialect, location filming, and a meta-documentary style, *L'uomo delle stelle*–the story of Joe Morelli, a charlatan who travels around 1950s Sicily conducting screen tests that never reach the promised land of *Cinecittà*–causes the viewer's reactions to fluctuate between a consciousness of the artifice behind the diegetic action and a series of emotional responses that are spontaneously triggered by certain camera shots. The authenticity of the film is to be found in its screen test sequences and what they communicate to viewers at a basic affective level. Filmed in straight-on, centred close-up, the non-professional actor's sight line to the centre of the lens, these compositionally powerful sequences are a throwback to the era of pre-linguistic communication when expression and gesture were fundamental. These long duration close-ups, longer than to be expected in mainstream cinema, gradually reaccustom viewers to interpret and react affectively to the non-verbal communication of Morelli's clients. Although contrived in nature, the meta-documentarial screen test scenarios also underline the power of the visual image and the fragility of the subject; consequently, viewers observe the film's action through the perspective of a realism/artifice dichotomy, engaging with the diegetic action to different degrees ranging from empathic responses during the screen test sequences to more detached, intellectual, stylistic considerations.

Alessandro Baricco's acclaimed monologue *Novecento*/*Nineteen Hundred* inspired the film *La leggenda del pianista sull'oceano*/*The Legend of 1900*, and an awareness of the film's literary origins–particularly if viewers are familiar with Baricco's story concerning a talented pianist who spends his life on an ocean liner without ever going ashore–may condition the reception of Tornatore's interpretation of it. However, the director characteristically endows the screenplay with a degree of affect that the original text does not possess, creating a film whose aesthetics blend with Baricco's epic fable to reopen the concept of the sublime in artistic contexts. Taking *La leggenda del pianista sull'oceano* as an example, a framework for the sublime in film can be elaborated, focusing on visual, aural, and narrative techniques which induce this most intense of affective experiences–a framework based principally on Kant's and Burke's definitions of the phenomenon. The film's protagonist possesses qualities that philosophers have associated with the sublime in humans, such as

innocence, and, ultimately, a serene indifference to death. The narrative includes moments when his musical dexterity overwhelms his listeners, stopping them dead in their tracks and making time stand still–a characteristic of the temporal sublime. The ocean, occasionally stirred into a raging fury, is a natural phenomenon that is often held to induce sensations of the sublime in those beholding it, and it is a constant presence in the film's *mise-en-scène*. The sublime is a phenomenon that retains its intensity through a presence that is powerful yet transitory. Therefore, in the context of *La leggenda del pianista sull'oceano*, it is integrated with other affective and intellectual approaches, this being instantiated by a self-conscious tendency to deploy the aesthetics of various film genres ranging from *film noir* to silent comedy. It is an artistic strategy that creates another level of intellectual engagement for viewers who are cognizant of film styles and genres; this particular approach links *La leggenda del pianista sull'oceano* with examples of Tornatore's earlier work such as *Nuovo Cinema Paradiso* in terms of the way viewers are invited to reflect on the anterior film styles that are highlighted, and also on the qualities and values that characterized the contemporary production and reception of these films.

Although unregulated scopophilic activity has become a socially accepted norm, the voyeuristic overtones of *Malèna* nevertheless possess disturbing qualities for today's audiences, since the film evolves into a critique of the hedonism and intrusiveness of modern spectatorship. Viewers are aligned with Renato Amoroso–an adolescent growing up in 1940s Sicily–and his voyeuristic activities constitute the film's single purposive, goal-oriented action, the only cognitive stimulus in the midst of a morass of emotional pathos, temporal remoteness (the film is an extended flashback), and impotence through being aligned with an adolescent. The ambivalence of Renato's perspective as he spies on Malèna Scordìa, a local woman, centres on the fact that he occupies a position between legitimate infant curiosity and transgressive adult perversion. But since he essentially remains a powerless figure within his social milieu, viewers are anaesthetized against the unsettling implications of their voyeuristic excursions in his company. This is an insidious effect which conditions viewers to accept from the film's outset the unlimited objectification of Malèna. The film's final sequences undermine the spectator's sense of pleasurable omniscience as there is a sudden shift in alignment from Renato to Malèna when she is eventually lynched by a mob after the town's liberation by the Allies. During this sequence–the degradation of an individual whose image has been avidly consumed from both within and beyond the screen diegesis–the camera adopts the same fetishistic close-ups of Malèna's body that were used during the sensual earlier scenes of her, an inversion of the pleasurable objectification of her that had occurred before. The way Tornatore's camera repeatedly "frames"

Malèna within performance spaces such as courtrooms or outdoor cafés supports this interpretation of the film as an attempt to re-sensitize new millennium viewers to the implications of utilizing an individual's image for personal gratification.

The act of viewing films may cue varying emotional and cognitive reactions from spectators at given moments, and Grodal suggests that the intensity and duration of a viewer's responses can be delineated into a hierarchy depending on the nature of the stimuli within a film. Diegetic events may feature objects which elicit almost instantaneous emotional responses such as fear or hatred, and autonomic reactions including flinching or shuddering may follow. Screen action may also induce tense, enactive reactions from viewers–responses linked to the urgent achievement of a goal, for example. These narrative elements elicit affective and cognitive responses at an immediate, instinctual level. Other narrative or aesthetic elements may activate a "non-conscious associative network enriching the experience",[19] the spectator perhaps identifying a visual pattern within the film that evokes personal memories of real-life occurrences, and then experiencing nuanced sensations and feelings as a consequence of recognizing this. The most distanced form of spectator participation occurs when a film's action is observed with a consciousness of its intellectual macro-frame, the ideological agenda that determines the sort of perspective through which the narrative events should be viewed, although it should be acknowledged that not every viewer will be able or willing to adopt this particular mode of reception. However, the objective of the following study is to identify the mechanisms in Tornatore's films through which a range of interconnected affective and intellectual responses are elicited, and the volume therefore envisages a relatively orthodox form of viewer reception that fluctuates between immediate psychological and physiological reactions to visual and aural stimuli, and more reflective considerations of the broader implications of a film's theoretical remit. This volume contends that certain modes of film-making succeed in reducing the sense of disconnection and distance that may evolve as a consequence of viewers alternating between emotional and cerebral modes of engagement, and it proposes that the cinema of Giuseppe Tornatore exemplifies the way in which an affective and intellectual synergy can develop between a film's aesthetics and its conceptual agenda. The affective power that characterizes Tornatore's work has long been acknowledged by critics, and while examining the configurations of visual, aural, and narrative devices that generate such intensely poignant viewing experiences, the following analysis will also elucidate the ways in which the director's distinctive stylistic approach intensifies the significance of the social and cultural questions that lie at the heart of his films, issues affecting Western

society–technologically sophisticated yet socially fragmented–as it moved into the twenty-first century.

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[1] Noel Carroll, *Interpreting the Moving Image* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 3-4. Berys Gaut, "Film Authorship and Collaboration" in *Film Theory and Philosophy*, ed. by Richard Allen and Murray Smith (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1997), 149-72.

[2] Paisley Livingston, "Cinematic Authorship" in Allen and Smith, 132-48 (144).

[3] See Aldo Fittante's essay "Giuseppe Tornatore: Il cinema si fa con l'uva" in *Sicilia e altre storie–Il cinema di Giuseppe Tornatore* (Naples: Edizioni Scientifiche Italiane, 1996), ed. by Valerio Caprara, 35-45 (43).

[4] Patrick Rumble, "Tornatore e l'America: il cinema dell'anamnesi" in Caprara, 11-20. Rumble suggests that audiences were drawn to a perceived sense of emotional sincerity and authenticity in *Nuovo Cinema Paradiso*, the film eliciting an awareness of the way people's sense of collective and community identity had been eroded as a consequence of the rootless, nomadic existence of individuals today, and also as a result of the sacrifices required to attain a certain social status and financial security.

[5] See Torben Grodal, *Moving Pictures* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997), 279-80, for a more detailed definition of macro-frames as filters which condition the viewer's experience of a film's diegetic action. For example, certain macro-frames–such as the conscious use of generic conventions including the comic–may cause spectators to redefine the reality status of the act of fiction that is being viewed, and may reduce or eliminate any instinctive empathic identification with a film's protagonist.

[6] See, for example, Murray Smith, *Engaging Characters* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1995); *Film Theory and Philosophy* ed. by Richard Allen and Murray Smith (Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1997); Noel Carroll, *Interpreting the Moving Image* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998); *Passionate Views–Film, Cognition and Emotion*, ed. by Carl Plantinga and Greg M. Smith (Baltimore and London: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1999).

[7] Plantinga and Smith, 2.

[8] Grodal, 15.

[9] Grodal, 5-6.

[10] Gregory Currie, *Image and Mind: Film, Philosophy, and Cognitive Science* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), 144-45.

[11] Plantinga and Smith, 7.

[12] Grodal (5) underlines the limitations of Freudian concepts when applied to visual fictions, reducing narrative scenarios to "battlefields" within which principles of pleasure and desire confront the reality of the rational order. Plantinga and Smith (11-12) note that Freudian/Lacanian perspectives of desire and pleasure are too broad as concepts to provide specific insights into how particular films affect viewers emotionally at given moments. They argue that psychoanalytical criticism rarely investigates the particulars of filmic emotion, concentrating instead on "articulating the filmic mechanisms of subject positioning and on labeling the mechanisms of desire."

[13] Grodal, 6-7.

[14] Grodal, 6.

[15] Plantinga and Smith, 15-16.
[16] Grodal, 283.
[17] Murray Smith, 79-80, 96.
[18] See Dirk Eitzen, "The Emotional Basis of Film Comedy" in Plantinga and Smith, 84-99 (94-95). Eitzen's theories are discussed in the context of *La domenica specialmente*; *Il cane blu* on page 78.
[19] Grodal, 279-80.

CHAPTER ONE

IL CAMORRISTA/*THE PROFESSOR*
MAFIA, RITUAL, AFFECTIVE ESTRANGEMENT

The sociological importance of the gangster movie genre and associated sub-genres such as mafia-related films has attracted critical attention for the way in which its representations of close-knit family units, presided over by protective and authoritative patriarchal figures, sometimes reawaken the desire of viewers for a sense of community that has all but disappeared.[1] It is a perception linked to the sense of social isolation and alienation experienced by a range of city dwellers including disadvantaged indigenous inhabitants and also economic migrants who are dislocated from their home environments. The appeal of contemporary gangster/mafia films has been contextualized by Fredric Jameson with regard to the way in which the cohesion of white middle-class groups has suffered from social fragmentation, from the growth of permissiveness, and from the loss of authority figures. He suggests that seminal films such as *The Godfather* (1972) evoke an ideal of an older collective neighbourhood solidarity–albeit conditioned by the protective security of an influential (god)father–a sense of community which the viewer's own privatized existence may lack.[2]

In the context of cognitive approaches to film reception, the intimate resonances of visual fictions as experienced by individual viewers–for example, the sociological impact of mafia movies as outlined by Jameson–emanate from the many "associative networks", based on personal experience, that condition a viewer's engagement with a film. However, Torben Grodal also proposes that during certain cinematic narratives, viewers mentally engage with diegetic events to a point where they move beyond the confines of personal experience to simulate the thought patterns of characters with whom they might have little in common. This is a process that might include transitory forms of identification with characters during tense, goal-oriented sequences in which the viewer's mental evaluation of the desirability of achieving certain aims may also induce linked physiological responses. Films during which a viewer's value

system is temporarily displaced in favour of emotional and cognitive assimilations of other perspectives sensitize spectators to the alternative existential trajectories that their own lives might have followed, and this is a primary characteristic of Tornatore's *Il camorrista*. It is a film which activates the different levels of viewer engagement outlined by Grodal,[3] not only setting in motion the viewer's own associative networks but also inducing a vivid sense of involvement with the diegetic action via transitory, empathic attachments that are formed between viewers and characters from the Neapolitan underworld. The spectator's often intense affective and cognitive absorption in the semi-fictional events of the film interlinks with–and is reinforced by–a more detached awareness of the film's intellectual macro-frame and its focus on the social, economic, and political factors which perpetuate the phenomenon of organized crime and condition the lives of its participants.

The affective power of the film's narrative is partly attributable to its scenes of stylized mafia violence and the aversive viewer reactions that are prompted by these sequences, but a film based entirely on these aesthetic principles would only elicit a defensively distant and predominantly cognitive form of engagement from viewers with regard to the diegetic action, a mode of participation that is discussed later in this chapter. Instead, the storyline of *Il camorrista* draws a range of different emotional responses from viewers which mainly centre on attachments to members of a mafia clan which comprises an emerging *mafioso* known as the Professor of Vesuviano, his sister Rosaria, and the surrogate family of outcasts and petty criminals with whom they surround themselves. Although the clan's composition and internal dynamics may differ from the viewer's extra-diegetic interpersonal relations, it is a form of familial structure which, within the world of the film, provides the only element of stability in sociological and narrative terms amidst a morass of corruption and carnage. It is a point of reference which may cue processes of associational recognition within viewers, and also a greater understanding of the value system espoused by the clan; however, the emotional and cognitive attachments towards individual characters that evolve from the viewer's engagement with the film raise significant questions concerning the extent to which spectators suspend their everyday values for the duration of a film.

As part of the film's conceptual framework–the macro-frame or filter which colours, and in the case of Tornatore's work, intensifies the significance of the screen action–the function of the *camorra,* or Neapolitan mafia, in offering sustenance, employment, and, in certain cases, justice to the socially excluded is emphasized as a means of highlighting the state's limitations in these areas. The narrative focus then narrows to examine how the lives of specific characters are transformed by their association with the *camorra*, individuals with whom viewers form attachments as a consequence of the visual and narrative

techniques deployed in the film. The film's characters gradually undergo a process of moral degradation as a result of their exposure to the escalating violence around them, and the viewer's attachments to characters such as Rosaria, who initially appear to be moderate figures within the film's value system, ultimately lead to a sense of alienation. This process serves to reinforce the didactic element of the film's conceptual agenda which appeals to viewers to reconfirm their faith in the laws of the state, "unico e vero presidio del vivere civile" (the one and only bastion of a civilized way of life).[4]

The narrative of *Il camorrista* draws on several identifiable episodes from the worlds of organized crime and politics in Italy from the 1960s to the 1980s, amalgamating biographical elements from the life of the Neapolitan mobster Raffaele Cutolo with indirect references to political scandals such as the "Cirillo affair" to endow the film with a further extra-textual frame of reference which may condition the way in which Italian viewers engage with it.[5] These references are distilled into the story of the rise and fall of the Professor, an ambitious individual who attempts to gain control of the Neapolitan underworld by wresting control of the city's racketeering and illicit trade from a rival crime syndicate. The film's linear narrative charts the Professor's induction into the ways of the clans, as an incident in his childhood sees him used as an accessory to murder, a form of exploitation that his father, owing a favour to a local mafia boss, is unable to prevent. In later life, when his sister Rosaria is indecently assaulted, the Professor is incarcerated for murdering her assailant, and subsequently takes the opportunity to form his own clan from the scores of disaffected inmates housed in the local prison. With the help of acquaintances such as Ciro Parrella and Alfredo Canale, the new *camorra*'s ruthlessness soon establishes the Professor as the favoured Neapolitan intermediary for the larger American organized crime networks. The Professor's influence even enables him to intercede when a local Christian Democrat politician is kidnapped by leftist Red Brigade terrorists, an intervention which earns him the gratitude of senior cabinet ministers and serves to extend his influence into the sphere of politics. But when the Professor is imprisoned as a result of a rare police breakthrough, the balance of power shifts within the Neapolitan underworld, and a rival mafia group gains hegemony of the region as many of the Professor's clan desert him and switch sides.

In order to elicit a degree of affective engagement from viewers, and an element of cognitive interest as regards the achievement of the aims of the Professor's mafia faction, the way in which he and Rosaria behave according to familial tradition, and the manner in which they establish an organization whose support for its impoverished acolytes is literally more than might be expected from one's own relations, receives considerable narrative emphasis. This is reiterated twice by Alfredo, who, having been given a senior role in the clan by

the Professor, and also a jacket as a gift upon his release from prison, admits to Rosaria that not even his own family would have treated him so well. The importance and, indeed, attractiveness of family tradition and loyalty are highlighted in a scene where the Professor earnestly turns to Rosaria–a senior member of his own family–to ask her blessing as he takes the decision to become a *capo*, or boss. A more understated reference to the bond between the Professor and Rosaria is made as the Professor is seen in his cell shortly before Naples is struck by an earthquake; the sequence begins with a telling close-up of the Professor's bedside table, the camera indexing a photo of Rosaria which has the light of a small lamp focused on it as might be done with a saint's image. There is an almost immediate pan to the right towards the Professor, but the view of the photograph is a significant detail–a flicker of humanity–before the chaos of the earthquake and the ensuing prison riot. These paratelic elements of narrative information briefly create a suffused emotional climate that contrasts with the tense, telic, goal-oriented events around which the film is based. Given their likely similarity to the viewer's own interpersonal relations, these scenes of kindred solidarity activate associational recognition, facilitate the viewer's simulation of the thought processes of the characters involved, and constitute a foundation on which attachments may form between viewers and the screen characters.

The issue of how film spectators relate to screen characters continues to be widely debated within film studies, with certain scholars, including Elizabeth Cowie, casting doubt on the feasibility of viewer "identification"–the likelihood of viewers ever locating fully rounded representations of themselves and their attitudinal perspectives on screen. Cowie suggests that:

> Identification never involves unified or whole identities, as if it were the transportation of a self into the other or the other into the self, as an encounter between two fully present identities, two subjects. In cinema, too, therefore, identification cannot be taken to be the vehicle for a transportation of the spectator out of him or herself into another–temporary but nevertheless complete–dwelling. Identification institutes not identity as a unity but as alienated, partial, and multiple.[6]

Another perspective, this time from the realm of cognitive theory, which asserts that the spectator's identification with screen characters is fragmented and selective, is posited by Murray Smith. Outlining a process which he labels *alignment*, Smith observes that a film's narration can restrict itself to the actions of a single character, or move more freely along the spatio-temporal paths of several characters, thereby giving the viewer access to their thoughts, feelings, and actions. By contrast, what Smith terms *allegiance* evolves as a consequence of the way film narratives attempt to marshal a viewer's sympathies for or

against specific characters, spectators evaluating screen characters in terms of morality, desirability, and other factors, then subconsciously ranking them in a system of preference, before finally attaching themselves to a particular character and taking an interest in their welfare.[7] The process of alignment allows for the partial, transient glimmers of identification described by Cowie, and indeed for plural identification, as viewers can engage with different characters at varying points along a film's narrative continuum. Smith emphasizes that alignment does not automatically lead to allegiance, since viewers can be given insights into the thought processes of repugnant individuals who are unlikely to feature in a viewer's hierarchy of preferred characters.[8] The question of a viewer's developing sympathies becomes particularly intriguing when characters in films such as *Il camorrista* all occupy what, in everyday terms, would be the nether regions of the moral spectrum.

The film resists the temptation to present the Professor, Rosaria, and their associates as flawed personalities whose involvement in organized crime is a consequence of their moral deviancy. Instead, the narrative is a dispassionate meditation on human destiny and the vulnerability of individuals in the face of overwhelming social, political, and economic forces–conditions which lead underprivileged yet enterprising people to engage in illicit ventures that are mirror images of the profiteering cartels and corporations run by their legitimate capitalist counterparts. The film's theoretical implication that an individual's fate is primarily influenced by external factors is combined with a narrative which aligns viewers closely with the film's protagonists both during public and private moments. Therefore, without obstacles such as intrinsic character flaws that might distance viewers, the foundations are laid for transitory forms of viewer allegiance towards certain characters, types of engagement that Smith labels "central imagining". These are instances during which viewers empathize with characters and share their emotional experiences, rather than simply sympathizing with a character's situation and experiencing a different sort of emotion, such as pity–a process which Smith calls "acentral imagining".[9] However, even temporary allegiance to the film's characters is by no means assured, since the internal value system of *Il camorrista* is focused on Neapolitan mafia groups and their codes of behaviour. For some affective engagement with the film's protagonists to develop, viewers need to suspend their real-world attitudes and mentally simulate behavioural tendencies that diverge from their own. Attributes such as loyalty, ruthlessness, and discretion are prized above all else within the film's value system, qualities which reflect the mafia code of honour, and in terms of Smith's concept of viewer allegiance, a hierarchy of preference may evolve as certain characters appear attractive *relative to* others on the basis of these behavioural standards.

Individual viewers may or may not decide to engage with the film on these terms; some spectators may elect to observe the diegetic events as a distanced spectacle through the film's conceptual macro-frame, but for viewers who are emotionally and cognitively drawn into the developing action, certain sequences appear to have been constructed with the aim of provoking serious reflection about the extent to which film-makers are capable of subverting a viewer's everyday values for the duration of a film. The scene in which Alfredo Canale uncovers a plot by a rival mafia faction to assassinate the Professor–a discovery that prompts anxious telephone calls and a frantic car chase through the suburbs of Naples–is remarkable for the way in which it engrosses viewers and inspires feelings of allegiance towards the mobster. According to Grodal, sequences such as the car chase, which is motivated by a need to warn the Professor of impending danger, portray the sort of purposive, goal-oriented, physical action which arouses a degree of cognitive interest and evaluation within viewers.[10] The tense, telic nature of the action occupies the viewer's attention over and above concerns related to the morality of the character.

The sequence's increasingly rapid montage is also a time-honoured technique for increasing viewer agitation, with further narrative tension being elicited by the exposure of a protagonist to the possibility of two diametrically different outcomes, one preferable but improbable, the other less desirable and more likely. The narrative follows Alfredo's actions for some considerable time, from his departure from a restaurant where he shadows a waiter who has been acting suspiciously, to his discovery of the rival faction's plot and his subsequent car journey. This cues an intense and prolonged alignment with Alfredo which, in turn, may lead to an evanescent allegiance to the character if viewers are able to simulate thought processes within existential contexts that are far removed from their own. In everyday terms, while viewers would remain indifferent to the outcome of one mobster's attempts to outwit his rivals, this particular sequence from *Il camorrista* illustrates the ways in which a viewer's values can be subtly recast through the articulation of tense, goal-oriented actions. In Alfredo's case, these actions are motivated by qualities such as loyalty and bravery which are prized both in everyday life and within the screen diegesis, and they are reinforced emotionally with repeated close-ups of his taut features to maximize the possibility of viewers relating empathically to the character.

The likelihood of viewer allegiance towards Alfredo increases when he is apprehended by the police, whose unexpected appearance at this narrative juncture appears almost calculated to antagonize. This is because the delay to Alfredo could prove fatal to the Professor, and the sense of irritation is fuelled by the nonchalance of the police inspector, who, being fully aware of the circumstances, blackmails Alfredo into betraying the clan's values (and also, by

implication, the value system temporarily adopted by many viewers) by demanding to know the Professor's whereabouts so that he might be saved through police arrest. This is a forced indiscretion that eventually costs Alfredo his life. Tornatore's depiction of the peripheral and almost meddling nature of the state and its representatives in this scene typifies its portrayal in the film as a whole, and reflects a perception among Italians of the irrelevance of the state in certain regions of the country. Regardless of their background, viewers of *Il camorrista* are made to appreciate a contrasting existential perspective, and to understand why individuals turn to the mafia in order to earn a living and combat everyday injustices in which the state is uninterested. The alignment of viewers with Alfredo and their possible allegiance to him–which may only last for part of the film–constitutes a radical departure from their everyday estimations and sympathies, and arguably forms the first stage in a process whereby viewers are shaken into a greater awareness of the limitations of state institutions in environments conditioned by wholly different laws and traditions.

While the theories of alignment and allegiance go some way to providing a conceptual framework through which the nature of a viewer's outlook towards screen characters can be understood, a purely cognitive approach does not fully explain the idiosyncratic thought processes that are set in motion within viewers, processes from which allegiance evolves. The concept that viewers subconsciously form hierarchized sympathies and antipathies towards characters is a plausible explanation of *how* viewers prioritize their preferences and form attachments, but the reasons as to *why* they do so, the factors which draw viewers to certain characters who may or may not resemble them, and not to others, might seem to be located in the parallel realm of psychoanalytical film theory. Without engaging in the speculative theorizing which can characterize psychoanalytical approaches to film reception, it is perhaps possible to suggest a number of hypotheses which might form the basis for future research concerning the ways in which viewers react to screen characters.

In the context of other art forms, for example literature, research has been conducted into the nature of the reader's responses towards specific narrative elements present within texts, in particular the way in which readers relate to fictional characters and scenarios which reflect their own values. Jacques Leenhardt has analysed the results of a series of experiments which convincingly suggested that readers use texts to seek confirmation and reinforcement of their own identities, these conclusions being drawn from tests which confirmed that French readers were consistently attracted to clan-family scenes in a Hungarian novel that closely reflected their own home life and values.[11] To recontextualize this idea in the context of film narratives, the narcissistic implications of the results of the experiment with French readers suggest that a desire for self-recognition constitutes a factor that might influence