

Lund University
Centre for Languages and Literature
Master Program in Film and Media History
Supervisor: Prof. Erik Hedling
Seminar Date: 31-05-2017

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FiMN09, spring 2017
Master's Thesis

Mimodiegetic and Volodiegetic Levels of Diegesis, Together with Variable Frame Rates, as Tools to Define a Tentative Early Film Language



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Abstract

This thesis focuses on the era of early film, with the aim to address an almost forgotten film language. Three aspects have been taken into account—variable frame rates, suppressed sound and hearing, and projection speeds—to analyze several examples of film to ascertain the techniques used by early filmmakers. I have also applied my findings of the techniques of yesteryear to contemporary films that have tried to imitate the early era production methods, in order to present the possibilities and difficulties in reproducing and utilizing the “old” language.

The thesis also examines what separated the early era from the modern era, thus identifying future avenues of research. In so doing, I have introduced two novel diegetic terms, namely mimodiegetic and volodiegetic, with the former referring to sound imitating the visuals and the latter relating to a volatile sound rising from the image. Neither of the terms represents a technique, or, for that matter, are restricted to the early era—both rather provide a means to define a specific technique. Finally, based on my findings, I argue that the early film language is problematic to utilize fully today but that it is, at the same time, not confined to the early era.

Keywords: silent era, diegesis, frame rate, frames per second, early film, intertitles, projection, *Girl Shy*, *The Movies*, *Fiddlesticks*, *One Week*, *Neighbors*, *Easy Street*, *Ask Father*, *The Artist*, *La Antena*, *Dr. Plonk*

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See the bibliography for copyright holders and complete sources pertaining to the editions from which the frames originate.

Two panning shots (Figures 2.2 & 8.1) are represented by a single, stretched image, stitched together from several frames. As a result, the objects being tracked appear multiple times across the stretched image. In order to represent the films faithfully, I decided to present the panning shots in this manner, rather than to suggest that they were separate shots by displaying independent frames. A sole exception is found in Figure 3.1, which ignores the pan described in the text. Since the camera returns to its starting point, a stitched image of the panning shot would create an overlaying effect, thereby obscuring the illustrative attempt. Furthermore, Figures 3.2 and 5.1 also have three frames each, but represent a single, static shot. Lastly, two of three frames in Figures 6.1 and 6.4 represent moments from static shots.

1. Prologue

1.1 A Tentative Early Film Language

In the fast-paced comedy *The Goat* (1921), the eponymous hero, played by Buster Keaton, is seen sprinting down a wide road, pursued by three police officers. They run toward the camera, placed by the directors Keaton and Mal St. Clair so that it looks up and frames the entire length of the thoroughfare. The chase moves rapidly toward a pair of train tracks visible in the lower part of the frame. Behind the camera, Elgin Lessley cranks away at a constant rate, permitting light to hit the silver halides in the hope of creating comical gold.

As the chasers speed with a seemingly great pace down the road, their quarry slows down as he reaches the train tracks. Having crossed them, he stops, turns, and removes his jacket, and, in an inserted medium shot, he begins shadowboxing to ready himself for a tangle with the law. Cutting back to the long shot, we see the policemen reaching the railroad. When they do so, a train enters the frame from the left, separating the chasers from the chatee. The latter escapes the confounded officers and exits the frame.¹ A silent train interrupted and interjected the scene, while at the same time ignoring the reality of sound. Likewise did the sprinting actors but the camera speed adjusted their motion and instead disrupted the physics of reality. The sequence described above would look and feel different if we were to apply a layer of real life to it, i.e. sound and lifelike motion. Not only would the train and the regular street cacophony be heard instantly and throughout the scene but the runners' travel time would differ. Such a layer of reality would reshape the esthetic design of the film. What the silent layer accomplishes is to mute what needs muting for the gag to work, namely the train stopping the police from catching their target. If no character indicates its presence, the train does not exist until it enters the frame for the audience to see. Moreover, shooting the chase with a lower frame rate gives it energy and pace, since the creators anticipated that the film would be projected at a higher rate. This allows for the suspension of an audience's knowledge of physics. A reality layer would take the initial frame rate and simply replay it at the same speed, reducing the swiftness of the chase to a brisk walk.

According to the American film historian Ben Model, the above-mentioned sequence exists in a different universe. The silent comedy world is proclaimed an "alternate reality,"

¹ *The Goat* (Joseph M. Schenck Productions, Buster Keaton Productions; USA; 1921), Dir: Buster Keaton, Malcolm St. Clair; Photog.: Elgin Lessley. The scene starts at ~00:05:27.

where a lack of both color and recorded synchronized sound “allowed for a kind of comedy...whose logic would not be plausible in real time.”² Model further argues that a purposeful frame rate-variation was lost when the synchronization of sound and picture became a necessity. Together with color and sound, we can add the absence of a constant frame rate to the proposed palette of an alternate reality.

No piece of writing regarding the silent era is complete without the oft-cited statement by Mary Pickford: “It would have been more logical if silent pictures had grown out of the talkie instead of the other way round.”³ Indeed, the British film historian Kevin Brownlow ended his book *The Parade’s Gone By* with the statement,⁴ whereas the American author Walter Kerr began his *The Silent Clowns* with it.⁵ Brownlow, in his essential study on the silent era, merely refers to it as Pickford’s summary of the sound era’s succession.⁶ Kerr, on the other hand, decides to use the quote to discuss why silent film established itself despite the presence of multiple sound systems, albeit all primitive reverberations.⁷ He questions Pickford’s assertion, inquiring about the logic of having everything at the outset—“sound, speech, color, the whole timbre and palette of recognizable life”⁸—and later removing them, thus limiting the reflection of reality.

The article with Pickford’s quote was published in the Sunday edition of the *New York Times Magazine* in December 1931. On that presumably cold winter morning, the readers could warm themselves with a piece about Hollywood’s influences during the zenith of its transition from silent filmmaking to its audible counterpart. Toward the end of the article, during the conversation with the now fading movie star, Pickford laments the bygone days of Hollywood *dazumal*. The quote is not of the vacuous sort; she added an inquiring preamble of her own: “Isn’t all art development a process of simplification? A search for a universal idea, a universal medium?” She ventured further, arguing that “We have narrowed the appeal, clogged the action.... I think the films today have too much talk. Dialogue should be reduced to a minimum

² Ben Model, "'Undercranking': The Magic Behind the Slapstick", *Journal of Film Preservation*, 93/10.2015 (2015), p. 26.

³ Anne O’Hare McCormick, 'Searching For the Mind of Hollywood', *The New York Times Magazine*, 13 December 1931, p. 21.

⁴ Kevin Brownlow, *The Parade's Gone By* (New edn.; New York: Ballantine Books, 1969).

⁵ Walter Kerr, *The Silent Clowns* (New York: Knopf, 1975).

⁶ Kevin Brownlow, *The Parade's Gone By*, p. 667.

⁷ Walter Kerr, *The Silent Clowns*, pp. 2-8.

⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 2.

and picture and pantomime should still tell much of the story.”⁹ It is easy to understand her sentiment. Pickford had been the most influential woman in the business and had witnessed an art form, perfected over three decades, regress into a rather rigid formula. Her own career as an actor had declined, coincident with her reluctance to embrace the new methods as a producer. Thus, with a lack of foresight, she dismissed the new approach at the nadir of its potential. Kevin Brownlow, with the advantage of hindsight, also laments but has thirty additional years of film history to support his views on the transitional phase: “Had the talkies been delayed just a few years, to give the onrush of silent-film technique time to reach its limits and settle down, had it been possible to use sound with discretion and discernment, instead of plastering dialogue thick over every inch of every picture, we might today be seeing commercial films of far higher artistic and technical level.”¹⁰

In 1980, Brownlow inquired what the correct speed was during the silent era.¹¹ Through cue sheets and instructions to projectionists, he concluded that a fluctuating frame rate was used when a film was projected in the theatre. He presented probable camera speeds as well, based on his own experiments. In contrast to Brownlow who analyzed speeds in *scenes* to approximate a proper viewing experience, Ben Model studied speeds of *separate shots* to manifest frame rates as a tool for successful gags. If we return to the sequence from *The Goat*, it becomes more than a generic pursuit. We can deduce a more calculated procedure to the scene. The chase is energized because a lower shooting speed projected at a higher rate will quicken the pace. Furthermore, the absence of any sound that would reveal the train aids in the gag’s efficacy. Lastly, the medium shot of Keaton shadowboxing is shot in a different speed than the long shot, giving him a more composed motion.

The possibility of an “alternate reality” is appealing. It ventures beyond the “axiomatic” truth that silent film is indeed different from talking pictures by absence of audible dialogue alone.¹² Consequently, is it feasible to examine the above-mentioned techniques and claim that their usage separates silent film from all other types? Are these methods still successful when used in a *synchronized sound film*?

⁹ Anne O’Hare McCormick, 'Searching For the Mind of Hollywood', p. 21.

¹⁰ Kevin Brownlow, *The Parade's Gone By*, p. 662.

¹¹ Kevin Brownlow, 'Silent Films: What Was the Right Speed?', *Sight & Sound*, 49/3 (1980), pp. 164-67.

¹² Audible dialogue recorded onto the film strip itself, *benshi* and other practitioners notwithstanding.

1.2 Aim and Disposition

1.2.1 Aim

Leonard Maltin wrote that “If comedy were a science, it could be explained and defined much more easily. But it is not a science, and the gag is not a mathematical formula.”¹³ The purpose of my thesis is to repudiate this. I intend to explain and define the silent film language in general—and the *lingua commedia* in particular—as a probable part of an *alternate reality*. This expression may seem arbitrary, but it does describe my goal in a succinct way. The “alternate reality,” or separate universe, would separate early films from talking pictures beyond the customary distinction that one form is silent and the other is not. Our aural notion of silence is not the only signal our brain receives. Other senses, e.g. the sense of weight and gravity, are in play. Furthermore, the text also discusses projection of early films to determine its tentative inclusion in the universe of old. Hence, if filmmakers use manipulations to arouse our sense of weight and movement, science and formulas may run in the background. Together with the possibilities to deafen a character—or, for that matter, us in the audience—an alternate reality becomes imaginable: a universal medium, as referred to by Mary Pickford.

Having botanized the academic garden of film in search for studies about frame rates and a practical use of hearing, I decided to plant a seed with this thesis. Due to my limited findings among the vegetation, such a seed will hopefully take root and contribute to a more complete flora. My intention is to focus on three aspects that separate silent films from talking pictures by more than silence alone. Each one is presented as a self-contained part and examined through a diverse selection of films, with the aim to show a prevalent utilization. To aid my research I have introduced two novel diegetic terms: *volodiegetic* and *mimodiegetic*. By these, I try to define further and separate the different components of diegesis, something that will assist my discussion regarding the proposed film language.

1.2.2 Disposition

The first aspect begins a discourse on a purposeful use of hearing by an actor. Can gags be created and successfully implemented if a character displays a sudden lack of hearing? Reversely, can they be successful if they necessitate hearing? A theoretical foundation in the French theorist Michel Chion’s studies on sound is built upon, together with the levels of

¹³ Leonard Maltin, *The Great Movie Comedians: Updated Edition from Charlie Chaplin to Woody Allen* (1st pbk. edn.; New York: Harmony Books, 1982), p. vii.

diegesis. An intermission before the second aspect examines a singular example of deafness by editing in Buster Keaton's *One Week* (1920). Following a study of the film's climax and gag, I compare the particular case with subsequent reiterations to examine if the gag operates on the same level.

The second aspect utilizes Kevin Brownlow's research in *What Was the Right Speed?* I adopt one of his examples to answer if indeed a varying projection speed aids in presenting a preferable version. This experiment will depart from the otherwise Comedy-driven studies throughout the thesis by scrutinizing *Home, Sweet, Home* (1914), a drama directed by D.W. Griffith. I further discuss early film in the context of proper presentation.

In the third part I describe Ben Model's studies on varying speeds both *inter-* and *intrascene*, and apply them on a wide range of comedic creators. My question for this aspect is whether it allows a shot to permeate the reality layer, in this case physics, conjuring up a gag solely based on the change of realness. Let me digress and state that Model is the reason I specifically bring up the chase sequence from *The Goat*. His study of purposeful frame rate variations in silent comedies—*The Goat* being among the subject films¹⁴—is one of the seeds for this thesis.

A fourth part examines contemporary films that either present themselves as silent films or contain silent components. These are dissected to establish if they exploit the three aspects discussed in the earlier sections. This, of course, if there *is* anything to exploit to declare the contemporary films belonging to the same type as their early counterparts. An epilogue encapsulates the four parts and its intermission, converging in a conclusive chapter to determine if early films indeed used an intrinsic language, and thus rightfully can be called an alternate reality.

1.3 Theory and Material

1.3.1 Theory

Michel Chion's *Film, A Sound Art* is used as a foundation for my first part.¹⁵ He discusses how early film portrayed action and sound through images. As an example, he mentions the firing

¹⁴ Ben Model, 'Undercranking: Buster Keaton in "The Goat" - Reel 1, Part 1' [Web Video]. Published 3 Nov 2015, *Youtube*. [Accessed 26 January 2017, offline copy in author's possession. URL in Biblio.].

¹⁵ Michel Chion, *Film, A Sound Art* [Art sonore, le cinema], trans. Claudia Gorbman (New York: Columbia University Press, 2009).

of revolvers in *The Great Train Robbery* (1903). Since they are inaudible to the audience, the smoke coming from the barrels thus represents the action. In addition, Chion suggests a visual representation of sound using an example from *Stachka* (1925). Several close-ups of a factory siren indicate not only a persistent sound, but the recurring cuts to the siren also suggest a usage of editing beyond its narrative function. These recurring cuts became partly a reminder that the sound is sustained, partly a montage technique, by which the editor could cut to different reaction shots with each insert of the siren. Chion argues that common sounds, such as footsteps and running water, were not necessary. The audience already carries these sounds with them.¹⁶

Melinda Szaloky develops this further in 'Sounding Images in Silent Film,' in which she summarizes a point made by Balázs that "simply adding sound to an image that implied such a sound" was a pointless practice and a waste of the sound film's potential.¹⁷ Chion, on the other hand, argues that a duplication of "two perceptions so different in their essence" is never redundant.¹⁸ Thus, he contradicts himself regarding the "common sounds" and their necessities. Later in his book, Chion refines a notion from his earlier work *Le son du cinéma*. Instead of a complete cinematic change when synchronized sound was introduced, he proposes that the early film language survives "*beneath* sound film" [Chion's emphasis] as its own layer. Sound film is then allowed, or, at least, has a possibility, to "revert almost entirely to the language of silent film."¹⁹

Discussing auditive suspension in *Audio-vision: Sound on Screen*, Chion describes the term as "specific to the sound film and...occurs when a sound naturally expected from a situation" is intentionally suppressed by the filmmaker, either by a gradually subdued effect or a sudden one.²⁰ This creates what he calls a *phantom sound*. Having the same effect as a phantom limb, the audience is aware of, and senses, the sound, its absence notwithstanding.²¹ Describing it in *Film, a Sound Art*, Chion refers to it as a "sound that the image suggests but that we don't hear." Other sounds within a scene accentuate the sudden loss of one sound. Chion

¹⁶ Ibid., p. 5 f.

¹⁷ Melinda Szaloky, 'Sounding Images in Silent Film: Visual Acoustics in Murnau's "Sunrise"', *Cinema Journal*, 41/2 (2002), p. 112.

¹⁸ Michel Chion, *Film, A Sound Art*, p. 16 f.

¹⁹ Ibid., p. 263 f.

²⁰ Michel Chion, *Audio-vision: Sound on Screen* [L'audio-vision: son et image au cinéma], trans. Claudia Gorbman (New York: Columbia University Press, 1994), p. 132.

²¹ Ibid., p. 112.

argues for a layer of silence to exist beneath that of the sound film, with its “audible and synchronized sound” added.²²

The second part is based on Kevin Brownlow’s 1980 article ‘Silent Films – What Was the Right Speed?’ in which he studies projection speeds. Albeit a technically archaic text today, his research findings are still valid. He found that the speed varied, contrary to what early cameramen claimed. Instead of, as the operators said, a constant 16 frames per second (fps), cue sheets, projectionists and trade papers all indicate variable rates. A cue sheet may ask for 21 fps, while a projectionist insists their theatre manager would ignore it, by ordering the film to be run according to a set time table. Brownlow substantiates this by conducting experiments of his own, aided by the technology available at the time. These were compared with his findings on the cue sheets, and in a table he presents twenty-four films from separate studios and what speed he deems correct (observe *deems*). In the article, he notes that this practice of determining speeds is not a definite proof. Everyone possesses one’s own sense of rhythm and the truth of reality can differ a frame or two.²³ Nevertheless, the slight deviation from person to person is minimal and with the technological advances made since the 1980s, I have confidence in replicating the experiment. We do, after all, practice and experience reality every day. My ways of performing this experiment is detailed in chapter four.

A more modern approach—and indeed accessible on another medium entirely—is presented by Nicola Mazzanti while appearing as a guest writer on film historian David Bordwell’s website.²⁴ Mazzanti, co-founder of Bologna’s Cinema Ritrovato festival and conservator at the Cinematek in Brussels, initially mentions the materialistic Parousia always presumed when a new product is made available—a new innovation dethroning sliced bread. In Mazzanti’s text, it is the digital cinema in a redeeming role; all the drawbacks of analog film were rendered obsolete. His observations focus on the digital replacement in the projector booth and of frame rates. He discusses, from an archival point of view, the change from predominantly 35 mm film to their digital equivalent in Digital Cinema Packages (DCPs). In the beginning of DCP, says Mazzanti, “in the hurry to produce a standard that could work,” there existed but two rates: 24 and 48 fps. When diverse interests inquired about additional frame rates, a workgroup was formed to handle the inevitable inclusion of more speeds. Thus, to

²² Michel Chion, *Film, A Sound Art*, pp. 483, 171.

²³ Kevin Brownlow, ‘Silent Films: What Was the Right Speed?’, p. 165.

²⁴ Nicola Mazzanti, ‘Silent Frame Rates and DCP’ [Blog Post]. Published 23 Oct 2015, *David Bordwell's Website on Cinema*. [Accessed 6 February 2017, offline copy in author's possession. URL in Biblio.].

accommodate the needs of archivists, rates deemed to belong to the silent era were accepted into the fold.

A DCP allows for playback in theoretically any frame rate, as the digital frames are lines of computer code and not celluloid.²⁵ Mazzanti further emphasizes a possibility of looking at early films with modern eyes. Continuity and its opposite are, he says, important today, whereas the early filmmakers had a more lenient disposition toward it. They also tolerated different frame rates, and Mazzanti argues that audiences of yesteryear were forgiving when a film was presented in an inconsistent speed.

While restoring *Tillie's Punctured Romance* (1914), Ross Lipman had major problems with determining the film's speed: "When one watches the film projected at a constant speed – any speed – one can see variations from scene to scene, and also within scenes."²⁶ He asks what the appropriate solution should be. One suggestion is to approximate a sense of natural movement—as Brownlow did—resulting in a constantly vigilant projectionist, tweaking the speed as the film runs. This is an irksome but possible way and one that early projectionists practiced, as Walter Kerr mentions in *The Silent Clowns*: "When the film was projected in a theater, it was subject to the ministrations of...an operator who could...alter the film speed from shot to shot, reel to reel, hour to hour."²⁷ This quote is echoed by Brownlow when writing "the silent film placed responsibility on the projectionist in a way the sound film never did."²⁸ This responsibility is also referred to by Kerr: "Good projectionists prided themselves on their sensitivity."²⁹ Lipman argues that modern projection methods makes this "difficult under the best of circumstances."³⁰ Mazzanti's notion that a DCP allows for playback in theoretically any frame rate presents a tantalizing future for that field.

Part three is based on Ben Model's article "Undercranking": The Magic Behind the Slapstick,' in which he describes his discovery of variable frame rates. With the knowledge that "the films were being shown faster than the speed they were shot at," early film comedians used this "on purpose, so that it would appear to look like something else when shown faster." In an

²⁵ As Mazzanti, I add a footnote to mention bandwidth limitations that, for now, prohibits playback of literally any frame rate.

²⁶ Ross Lipman, 'Tillie's Punctured Legacy: Observations on the Restoration of Chaplin's First Feature', *Early Popular Visual Culture*, 7/2 (2009), p. 135 f.

²⁷ Walter Kerr, *The Silent Clowns*, p. 35 f.

²⁸ Kevin Brownlow, 'Silent Films: What Was the Right Speed?', p. 165.

²⁹ Walter Kerr, *The Silent Clowns*, p. 36.

³⁰ Ross Lipman, 'Tillie's Punctured Legacy', p. 136.

initial experiment, Model studied a scene from a copy of Charles Chaplin's *A Dog's Life* (1918)—a copy that he suspected was presenting the film in an improper speed. The scene in question, where the tramp is queuing in the employment office, lacked a “spry, clever, split-second-timing Charlie”; it only contained a Charlie being too slow and allowing the other applicants to pass him on the way to the counter, rather than being outwalked “at the last moment without Charlie being aware of it.”³¹

When Model manipulated the speed of the scene by a computer, he concluded that the copy's speed indeed was the improper one. As he manipulated the speed in the other direction, slowing it down, choreographed movements appeared and physics reinstated itself. Furthermore, albeit subjective, “The gag also ceased to be, well...funny.” Model argues that this practice allowed the creators to invent gags that only become gags when the film later was projected at a faster speed, and compares this with the animated cartoons of the forties and fifties.³² These cartoons also benefited from minute timing, choreographed movements and a complete disregard for the laws of physics.³³

1.3.2 Material

Comedy will be the main genre from which early films are gathered and perused. A sole melodrama, *Home, Sweet Home*, directed by D.W. Griffith, diverges from the humorous course of these chapters. Nevertheless, the cornucopia of *commedia muta* is quite inexhaustible. Hence, in order not to exceed the scope of this thesis, I need to circumscribe the period. One possibility would have been to focus on a single creator to be representative of the richness of the field. However, this would fail to achieve my intentions with this thesis. Instead, I decided to focus on short comedies created in the United States after the First World War. During this period of the early era, there were numerous comedians with large, if not total, control of their productions. Such a control gave the creators ample chances to craft and fine-tune their camera

³¹ Ben Model, "'Undercranking': The Magic Behind the Slapstick", p. 23.

³² *Ibid.*, p. 26.

³³ The experiment Mr. Model conducted with *A Dog's Life* can be reproduced, albeit with less precision, on Youtube: < <https://youtu.be/B9oqCepIkqc?t=3m40s> >. (The video should start at 00:03:40, where the employment office scene begins. If not, find this timestamp.) Pause it and click the cogwheel to access the playback settings. Set the speed to 1.5 and start the video. When the scene is done, reset the speed to normal and watch it again. Behold the difference.

work. Chaplin is exempted, due to his early opportunity to create auteuristic work before the armistice.

My final chapter, 'Contemporary Use of the Early Film Language,' delves through the layers of modern films to uncover usage of the early film language. No strict or narrow selection is made, and I also widen the perspective further to include foreign language films in the roster.³⁴ Furthermore, I abandon my hitherto strict scrutiny of comedy, leaving the field open for any genre. Lastly, no specific years limit my gathering of contemporary films. It thus widens the meaning of *contemporary*, which hence should be interpreted as any film produced after 1930. The scarcity of contemporary "silent" films outside the avant-garde cinema makes these choices a necessity.³⁵ Finally, this section comprises feature films entirely and forgoes the possibility to find the practice in short subjects.

1.4 Method

In order to scrutinize and locate a potential early film language, I have scoured the material with an analytical eye, through which the theoretical framework and its terminology have been applied. The thesis ultimately consists of numerous case studies presenting films that articulate this elusive vocabulary. There is a hitch in using such a method. What meaningful results can come of this if only films *with* a unique early language are presented? Surely this will misrepresent the material and omit films lacking any answer to the thesis' inquiry. A descriptive method will, without this annotation, indeed introduce a bias toward the existence of an early language. Nevertheless, a similar exploration into the early era of film has, to my knowledge, not been performed previously. Brownlow and Model are both journeying in the peripherals, and other studies mentioned earlier are hovering above the canopy of the territory. Thus my thesis becomes a point of departure and consequently needs to explore every path in this uncharted part of the map.

³⁴ In this case, the foreign language criteria equals what the Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences requires for the Academy Awards, i.e., "produced outside the United States of America with a predominantly non-English dialogue track." Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences, '90th Oscars Rules - Academy Awards of Merit' [PDF Document]. Published 2017, *Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences*. [Accessed 13 April 2017, offline copy in author's possession. URL in Biblio.]. P. 16.

³⁵ For experimental filmmakers using early era esthetics, see e.g. Guy Maddin, Peter Tscherkassky and Frans Zwartjes.

Departing from the analogy, every film is examined through a set of case studies. More specifically, a clear and formalistic survey will recount for each film analyzed. No chronological approach is taken. Instead, I intend to follow the thematic route for each chapter, because my purpose is to find the language, not trailing its evolution. Intrinsically, this will bypass questions regarding a developed usage, to instead pursue a continuous usage.

1.5 Terminology

1.5.1 Defining *Silent Film* and *Sound Film*

Sound in silent cinema is a steadily growing subject of interest. Scholars have plunged into the world of acoustic waves existing within a theatre: from orchestras to sound effect-performers, via narrators and *benshi* to audience members reading the intertitles out loud.³⁶ The continuously occurring adage “the silents were never silent” and its subspecies are abundant in the academic flora. Naturally, this has led academics to discuss the term *silent film* and the *silence* in silent cinema. Sheila J. Nayar, for example, suggests that we—it is unclear if she refers to scholars or everyone—have “dichotomized silent and sound narrative” in a far too eager manner. That by “cleaving these two forms based on the presence (or absence) of the voice,” we have obscured other factors that determine and separate cinema on each side of *The Jazz Singer*.³⁷

Szaloky, for instance, notes that silent films certainly did not flaunt an ensemble of “deaf and mute characters who moved about in a soundless space.” Neither did the spectators believe that silent films told “stories of voiceless people in a soundless world.”³⁸ Peter Kobel suggests, in *Silent Movies: The Birth of Film and the Triumph of Movie Culture*, to call them “non-dialogue films” because “so-called silent films nearly always had some kind of musical

³⁶ Selected academic writings: Abel, Richard, and Rick Altman, eds. *The Sounds of Early Cinema*. Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 2001; Marks, Martin Miller. *Music and the Silent Film: Contexts and Case Studies, 1895-1924*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1997; Altman Rick, Handzo Stephen, ‘The Sound of Sound: A Brief History of the Reproduction of Sound in Movie Theaters’, *Cinéaste*, 21/1,2 (1995); Berg, Charles, ‘Music On The Silent Set’, *Literature Film Quarterly*, 23/2 (1995).

³⁷ Sheila J. Nayar, ‘Seeing Voices: Oral Pragmatics and the Silent Cinema’, *Early Popular Visual Culture*, 7/2 (2009), p. 145.

³⁸ Melinda Szaloky, ‘Sounding Images in Silent Film’, p. 110.

accompaniment.”³⁹ This is, in my view, a somewhat flimsy proposal that confuses *films without dialogue* with the era it tries to define. In *The Voice of Cinema*, Chion mentions a few authors and their attempts to describe the early era. One argues that the period is quiet, another claims it is mute. Chion says it is deaf while remarking that “the Latin countries call silent cinema ‘mute cinema.’” He ventures on to say that “The silent film may be called deaf insofar as it prevented us from hearing the real sounds of the story. It had no ears for the immediate aural space, the here and now of the action.”⁴⁰

We cannot deny the fact that a character is inaudible to us. This makes a silent film quiet. However, that disregards the accompaniment in the theatre, which has to be taken into consideration when discussing the silent era. Deaf it is not—the audience and characters alike have satisfactory hearing. One could argue that a silent film is deaf because the characters cannot respond to the viewers’ reactions. However, the same holds true today. Finally, the characters do converse and they can hence impossibly be called mute. They also speak to us but we “hear” only what the intertitles say.

Settling on a label appears to be a thorny road in this maze of terms. One way can lead to a silent film produced in the silent era, while another path leads to a silent film produced today. An alternative route can give us a non-dialogue film produced thirty years ago, and a fourth to a contemporary deaf drama about a mute set in the silent era. Regardless, the *silent era* is, after all, an established term, even though silence was unheard of. A *silent film*, on the other hand, is not confined to this era, neither is a deaf, mute, or a quiet one. Having navigated the maze with a subjective compass, this thesis will henceforth use the term *early film* if the subject is from the *silent era*—an era also referred to as the *early era*.

The term *sound film* is equally vague; films of this kind co-existed for years before it outrivalled the prevalent form. As with *silent film*, it is inaccurate. *Don Juan* (1926), for instance, contains sound effects but lacks dialogue. Is it a *hybrid film*, a silent sound film, or a sound film from the silent era? More complicated still is *The Jazz Singer* (1927). Since that film contains talking and singing, is it a hybrid à la *Don Juan*? Yes, to a large extent, I would say. Nonetheless, it does not qualify as a *talking picture* or its colloquial offspring *a talkie*. These labels are reserved for a motion picture with sound and dialogue fully synchronized.

³⁹ Peter Kobel, *Silent Movies: The Birth of Film and the Triumph of Movie Culture* (New York: Little, Brown and Co., 2007), p. 259.

⁴⁰ Michel Chion, *The Voice in Cinema* [La voix au cinéma], edited and translated by Claudia Gorbman (New York: Columbia Univ. Press, 1999), p. 6 f.

Nevertheless, modern films are seldom described as talkies. They are, quite simply, *a movie* or *a film*. Another maze to navigate. If I, with a cautious mind, consider Google's Ngram Viewer a reliable tool, the term *talkie* was introduced in the late 1920s, dominated the Thirties, waned during the 1940s and settled alongside *talking*, *motion* and *moving picture* during the Fifties and Sixties.⁴¹ Neither of these terms is, according to Ngram, in the vicinity of the liberal use the term *movie* has, however.⁴² This thesis will use *talkie* for films between its inaugural years to the fifties. *Movie* and *film* as neutral terms will otherwise be suitable. If further precision is necessary, I will use the polysyllabic term *synchronized sound film*.

1.5.2 Defining *Diegesis* and its Diegetic Levels

The first part of my thesis addresses the interaction between aural diegesis and early film. Therefore, I will define the terms used in that chapter here. Diegesis constitutes of different diegetic levels within the medium of film and its narrative techniques. Acting as a point of departure, visual diegesis is composed of the (non-)fictional world built by *misé-en-scène*, camera angles and editing. Included in this (non-)fictional world is aural diegesis, which contains another set of components, namely those of speech, noise, sound, soundtrack, and so forth. An entry in *A Dictionary of Narratology* describes diegesis as “the world in which the situations and events narrated occur.”⁴³ Thus, a diegetic sound is specified as something that emanates and has a source in the story world, while non-diegetic, or extradiegetic, has a source outside diegesis. As an aid to the next chapter, let me further define and subdivide these phrases from an aural viewpoint, with the assistance of the French theorist Gérard Genette's book *Narrative Discourse: An Essay in Method*.⁴⁴

Extradiegetic sound details all sound that is not heard by the characters, i.e., not from within the diegetic world. Huddled under this umbrella term is a narrator, who is solely for the audience to hear. A soundtrack is also out of earshot from the character and thus extradiegetic.

⁴¹ To later gain usage again as *Walkie-Talkie* was introduced, see following footnote.

⁴² Google Books Ngram Viewer, 's.v. moving picture,talking picture,motion picture,talkie,movie' [Search Engine]. *Google Books Ngram Viewer*. [Accessed 30 Mars 2017, offline copy in author's possession. URL in Biblio.].

⁴³ *A Dictionary of Narratology*, Rev. edn. (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2003), s.v. 'diegesis, diegetic'. p. 20.

⁴⁴ Gérard Genette, *Narrative Discourse: An Essay in Method* [Discours du récit], trans. Jane E. Lewin (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell U.P., 1980).

Intradiegetic sound includes everything that issues from the story world. Accordingly, a soundtrack played, e.g. by a radio and heard by a character, is intradiegetic. Reversely, a narrator can converse with a character and trespass into the intradiegetic sphere. If a character becomes a narrator to tell a story to another character, he ventures inside the *metadiegetic* world, also known as the *hypodiegetic* world.⁴⁵ This can be further specified as *homo-* and *heterodiegetic*, depending on whether the narrator is part of that story-within-a-story or not.⁴⁶

⁴⁵ Ibid., p. 228 f.

⁴⁶ *A Dictionary of Narratology*, s.v. 'diegesis, diegetic'. p. 20.

2. Part I: Visual Sounds & Aural Images

2.1 Intentional Suppressing of Sound

I begin the text proper by reiterating Chion's example from *Stachka*. An insert shot of a siren suggested its resounding whistling, thus implanting in the audience the notion that sound is issuing throughout the scene and is heard by the characters. It is consistently intradiegetic. The object *and* its sound is part of the world even when it is unperceivable. Logic argues that the siren is silenced only when a new scene begins or when another insert shot terminates the sound. Such a practice can also be applied to a film with synchronized sound. By doing so, one could argue that the silent layer, the early film language, is present as a foundation underneath the sound layer. What if an insert shot of a resounding object is treated differently? What if the object or, rather, the sound is treated as a device to create different situations *when the creator desires?*

2.1.1 *Girl Shy* (1924)

In Harold Lloyd's *Girl Shy* (1924) a gag is created where the object, in this case a dog, always remains in the world, whereas its bark does not.⁴⁷ The setup: Mary Buckingham, played by Jobyna Ralston, is on her way to town by train and brings her dog. At the platform, she is informed by a man that dogs are prohibited on the train. She promptly hides the dog under the coat that she carries with her. Meanwhile, the eponymous character in Harold Meadows, played by Lloyd, is about to board the train. He bumps into Buckingham and as the shy gentleman that he is, he allows her to enter first while he waits. As Buckingham enquires the ticket collector about her carriage, Meadows edges past them but stops when the dog escapes and runs down onto the platform. "Dog's aren't allowed on this train anyway," the ticket collector says as the train gathers speed. Meadows, meanwhile, runs through the carriages to the rear and scoops the dog up with a borrowed cane. Retracing his steps through the train, he finds Buckingham, returns the dog and quickly withdraws to find an empty seat. Naturally, the only available seat is next to Buckingham, but his shy nature compels him to find a different one. Ultimately, he fails and settles next to Buckingham, who has once again hidden the dog beneath her coat.

⁴⁷ *Girl Shy* (The Harold Lloyd Corporation; USA; 1924), Dir: Fred C. Newmeyer, Sam Taylor; Photog.: Walter Lundin. The scene starts at ~00:20:30.

Enter the ticket collector. He progresses down the aisle as Buckingham's dog becomes restless. In an attempt to hide the dog properly, they place the dog inside Meadows' bag. Seconds after the collector has inspected their tickets and moved along, an insert shot shows the uncomfortable dog barking (Figure 2.1). A cut back to Meadow and Buckingham shows their reactions, and, in another shot, the collector's, who slowly turns in an inquisitive way. All Meadows can think of is to make barking sounds—or to clear his throat (which of the two is not entirely clear). Either way, this upsets the entire carriage, but the dog remains hidden. Contrasting the siren in *Stachka*, however, the dog does not seem to sustain its barking. The moment the collector turns away, another insert shot of the dog resumes the barking. At this point, it appears that the film controls the barking, not the dog. Thus, the dog remains in the intradiegetic world, but the sound does not. Meadows starts clearing his throat again, and with another insert shot the film reaffirms the continuing barks, like the siren in *Stachka*. Buckingham attempts to solve the predicament by procuring a box of dog biscuits, while Meadows stops and reaches for the bag. As he does so, the collector turns to walk their way. Naturally, he is suspicious of them, but since no barking is heard, he cannot investigate them further. What he does notice, however, is the biscuit box and the biscuit in Meadows' hand. Adding two and two together, he mimes “go ahead then, eat it,” to Meadows.

A final mix up occurs when a lady behind Meadows leaves with *his* bag. When she is halfway down the aisle, the film allows the dog to bark again. The game is up; the dog is set free. One can of course argue that the dog simply chooses not to bark constantly in order to be freed. However, the scene does not allow for such a coincidence; the interplay fits too well for it to be natural. Nothing is unintentionally interrupted by the barking. Hence, the dog barks when the film tells it to bark. Another suggestion is that the characters suddenly suppress their hearing and ignores the dog. Such a technique is possible but does not, in this case, fit the adjoining acting. An otherwise liberating technique from the early era that is difficult to use today.



Figure 2.1 An insert decides when the dog can bark in *Girl Shy*

The scene detailed above uses precisely the technique that Chion describes as an auditive suspension: it is “specific to the sound film and...occurs when a sound naturally expected from a situation” is intentionally suppressed, either as a fading effect or a sudden one, e.g. a cut.⁴⁸ Inherently, it is *not* unique to sound film. The barking dog is both “activated” and “suppressed” by choice. This is not the dog’s choice, however. Accordingly, reality has successfully been altered to accommodate a gag.

2.1.2 *The Movies* (1925)

Having the possibility to decide which sounds to suppress—and, in modern films, which to include—can be a blessing. It is reasonable to exclude *some* sounds conducive to the audiences’ comprehension of a scene in films today. If, for example, a conversation is taking place on Times Square, it is prudent to either strip the soundtrack from interfering noise, or to begin from scratch and build up a new soundscape in post-production. With the possibility to suppress a sound in an early film, opportunities to create gags based on this method arise.

Together with the comedian Lloyd Hamilton, director Roscoe Arbuckle (as William Goodrich) creates a simple yet effective gag by suppressing sound in *The Movies* (1925).⁴⁹ Hamilton plays a countryman who decides to venture into town in pursuit of success. Ostensibly, he lives in a house in the backcountry together with his parents and younger brother. Having kissed his mother goodbye and bid farewell to father and brother, he departs for the concrete jungle in search for a job. He waves adieu and walks toward the right edge of the frame. The camera pans with him and reveals that the noisy city is literally their neighbor (Figure 2.2). Without the cacophony of the metropolis to betray the setup, the inaudible sounds—the suppressed noises—enable a successful pay-off. Since there is no cut between Hamilton’s departure and the reveal, the sound, logically, must be intradiegetic to the characters. Not until the moment the camera shows the city does it become intradiegetic to us. It is a visual gag whose success is difficult to achieve in a film with synchronized sound, without introducing a mental recoil from the audience. If the same gag would play out in such a film,

⁴⁸ Michel Chion, *Audio-vision: Sound on Screen*, p. 132.

⁴⁹ *The Movies* (Lloyd Hamilton Corporation; USA; 1925), Dir: Roscoe Arbuckle (as William Goodrich); Photog.: Byron Houck. The scene starts at ~00:02:00.

the transition between soundscapes would, if anything, be an interesting transition choice as well as an artistic, rather than a humorous one.



Figure 2.2 From rural to urban landscape. Silence obscures the gag until the camera pans and reveals the setting in *The Movies*

2.2 The Mimodiegetic Level

While defining diegesis in the terminology sub-chapter, I discussed the common terms pertaining to it. I will here propose another diegetic term, tightly integrated with the *extradiegetic* level. Ann-Kristin Wallengren suggests in her doctoral thesis *An Evening at Röda Kvarn. Swedish Silent Film as Music Drama*, that there exists a “transformed” diegetic form. Wallengren’s term indicates music, either played by a live orchestra or a soundtrack on a home media release, that mimics an instrument being played on screen. Because the soundtrack seems to belong to the intradiegetic world, the music becomes transformed, or representative. The audio simply wants to unite with the visual representation of the silent instruments. This is impossible and resembles a mime, which always remains in their world *mimesis*—in a perception of literary reality. One example from Wallengren’s thesis considers an outdoor dance floor-scene, where a single violinist is imitated by the composed score specifically written for the film.⁵⁰ The single violinist notwithstanding, the score attempts to belong in the intradiegetic world. This, then, is the transformative diegetic sound on an impossible mission to join the visual imagery.

The prefix *trans-* appears insufficient to me, however. The music neither transforms nor successfully transgresses. A representative sound implies an intention to break through the extradiegetic barrier to become intradiegetic. Earlier in her thesis, Wallengren refers to the sound as imitating, with a possible interpretive function to insure a correct reading of the film.⁵¹

⁵⁰ Ann-Kristin Wallengren, 'En afton på Röda Kvarn: Svensk stumfilm som musikdrama' [English Abstract: An Evening at *Röda Kvarn*. Swedish Silent Film as Music Drama], (Ph.D. diss., Lund University, 1998), p. 218 f.

⁵¹ *Ibid.*, p. 32 f.

A prefix that connects to mimesis should hence suit the definition, while at the same time accommodate and harmonize the ancient etymological prefixes of the standard diegetic definitions: ergo, *mimodiegetic*.⁵²

2.2.1 *Fiddlesticks* (1927)

Harry Langdon's *Fiddlesticks* (1927) is a peculiar early film in the sense that it tells a story about a lousy double-bass player. Building a silent film entirely around someone's ability to produce musical discord is novel. There is no way an audience can hear or understand the atonal bass without either an insert shot of people reacting or an intertitle to affirm the racket. Nevertheless, Langdon et al. set out to produce *Fiddlesticks* in 1927 which, ironically—and arguably—is *the* transformative year in film history.

Langdon portrays a music student named Harry Hogan who displeases teacher and neighbors alike with his deplorable skills as a bass player. Eager to distance himself from Hogan, the teacher, acting on a hostile missive regarding “the guy who is making that noise,” prematurely grants Hogan a diploma.⁵³ With a fervent mind, Hogan sets out the next day and joins a group of street musicians. Prior to Hogan's arrival, the group has seen a favorable response from their audience, with coins being thrown their way from second-story windows. The minute Hogan joins, the coins are replaced by a vase. After fleeing the scene, the musicians regroup and establishes that “Someone is making sour notes!”⁵⁴ Each player blows a tune in turn, confirming that it is not their fault. Hogan, arriving late due to fleeing in the wrong direction, only re-joins when they have begun playing again. This time, a barrel replaces the coins. As might be expected, they discover the culprit and oust him.

Hogan's first performance with the musicians initially goes well. It is not until the vase crashes at their feet that they notice something is wrong. Thus, the other musicians must intentionally suppress their hearing to allow the vase to be the spark that sets off—and takes notice of—Hogan's poor performance. The gag is *not* the strident bass; it is the vase. Otherwise, an appalled reaction from the group to Hogan's performance would have sufficed. An identical gag is executed the second time; the musicians do not react to Logan, but rather to the barrel crashing down next to them. The intertitle emphasizes to the audience what the visual should

⁵² Appendix B gives a short definition and references to the ancient etymological terms.

⁵³ *Fiddlesticks* (Mack Sennett Comedies; USA; 1927), Dir: Harry Edwards; Photog.: William Williams. The scene starts at ~00:02:40.

⁵⁴ *Ibid*. The intertitle appears at ~00:10:20.

already have told us. Since the gag is the vase and the barrel, the notion that Hogan plays poorly is diminished. If it instead would be instant agony and hands-over-ears by everyone, we would get a clearer understanding and the intertitle would be unnecessary. While a narrative from the early era driven by sound has a potential to be experimental, *Fiddlesticks* fumbles. By using suppression, it sacrifices other realities such as proper reactions from the other musicians.

Nothing Doing (1927) presents us with another example of a faulty suppressed hearing. Charley Bowers plays an inept policeman who, apart from arresting the owner of a jewelry store instead of the thief, gets himself locked up by a gang. Finding his courage in a bottle of nerve tonic, he burst through a brick wall and surprises the gang.⁵⁵ He does not surprise them until he stands up, however. Bursting through a brick wall is not a stealth operation, but nevertheless, the gang does not react until a few seconds later. If they had been vigilant, Bowers would be overpowered immediately. Accordingly, the gag works *on the drawing board*, but the suppressed hearing weakens the impact. Indeed, the probable directorial cry, “wait until Charley stands!” is almost audible.

I have so far mainly discussed sounds that have been suppressed—faulty or not—to accommodate a gag from the *film’s* point of view. The techniques available in editing and camera movement: the dog barking when it is supposed to; and a city muted beneath a layer of reality. However, there are also examples where characters are temporarily deaf. In Buster Keaton’s *Seven Chances* (1925) we find a successful example of intentional deafness. Here, again, it is the character—in this case James Shannon—that lacks hearing. We in the audience can see the sound, as it were. To us it is intradiegetic; to Keaton’s character it is extradiegetic until he decides to hear—a matter of timing deliberately delayed by the creators. What bachelor James Shannon cannot hear is this: hundreds of anxious-to-be brides tracking him mere meters behind his back.⁵⁶ Since Shannon is momentarily deaf, the abundance of wedding-dressed women is allowed to increase, consequently allowing a successful gag. Instead of a sound suppressed by a fade or a cut, a silent film creator looking for a gag can, as we see, prescribe a temporary deafness to a character.

⁵⁵ *Nothing Doing* (Bowers Comedy Corporation; USA; 1927), Dir: Charles R. Bowers, Harold L. Muller ; Photog.: N/A. The scene starts at ~00:15:20.

⁵⁶ *Seven Chances* (Buster Keaton Productions; USA; 1925), Dir: Buster Keaton; Photog.: Byron Houck, Elgin Lessley. The scene starts at ~00:40:49.

2.2.1.1 Retrofitting the Soundtrack to Incorporate Mimodiegetic Sounds

Another example from *Fiddlesticks* explains why I have placed it under the sub-chapter detailing the mimodiegetic level. On the Blu-ray edition of the film, the soundtrack tries to imitate the bass. Whenever it *visually* plays, a faulty bass note can be heard on the soundtrack. These notes emphasize and further signify—together with the intertitle—Hogan’s incorrect handling of the instrument: the sound wants to unite with its originator, a technically impossible feat. All it can do is to mimic it, and when it does, it becomes mimodiegetic. Although the sound strictly speaking is not intradiegetic, only appearing to be, it transforms into something representative, as Wallengren suggests. Such a transformation is not specific to *Fiddlesticks*, early films, or silent films in general. Arguably, all sounds applied to a film afterwards are mimodiegetic and retrofitted: a gunshot; a neigh; and revving engine are all sounds likely added in post-production today. Sources also tell of live orchestras in the early days re-producing a sound immediately, either by a prop gun,⁵⁷ a sound effects-machine, or by an instrument.⁵⁸ I will not stray further from the early era, but any dialogue that is replaced by the Automated Dialogue Replacement process (ADR) can also be called mimodiegetic. This argument is a technical and rather niched point of view, and should not be considered as a foray into the receptive areas of film studies. When we in the audience hear a note, we naturally know it issues from any intradiegetic instrument. A negligible number of the viewers break their suspension of disbelief solely to reflect on a sound that technically is not produced by the instrument they see.

On home media releases, as we have seen with *Fiddlesticks*, the additional, emphasizing sound of, e.g., the atonal bass instrument is decided by the composer for the home media version. Other examples can be found in Kino Lorber’s Blu-ray edition of *Sherlock Jr.* (1924), where the chime of a doorbell echoes when Buster Keaton’s character presses the button.⁵⁹ In *Girl Shy*, Harold Lloyd’s production mentioned in the previous chapter, Lloyd’s character Harry Meadows is shy to the point of stuttering whenever he is forced to talk to a lady. To conquer this, his uncle blows a whistle, which brings Meadows to his senses and subsequently stops his stuttering. The soundtrack mimics the whistle with a mimodiegetic noise. This practice is brought to its limit in *The Artist* (2011), directed by Michel Hazanavicius, on which chapter

⁵⁷ Kevin Brownlow, *The Parade's Gone By*, p. 384 f.

⁵⁸ Peter Larsen, *Film Music* (London: Reaktion, 2007), p. 19.

⁵⁹ *Sherlock Jr.* (Buster Keaton Productions; USA; 1924), Dir: Buster Keaton; Photog.: Byron Houck, Elgin Lessley. The doorbell chimes at ~00:23:47.

six elaborates further. As a final point, all hybrid features with synchronized sound effects released until fully synchronized sound films prevailed, are mimodiegetic. This notwithstanding, however, Wallengren notes in her dissertation that a cue sheet for the Swedish film *Sången om den eldröda blomman* (Song of the Scarlet Flower, 1919) insists, on a scribbled note, that the theatre orchestra improvises the sound of a crash.⁶⁰ Thus, a practice to emphasize a sound was already in place during the early days. In what capacity is beyond the scope of this thesis. Throughout this sub-chapter we have seen a mimodiegetic sound try to defy its technically extradiegetic role—since it exists on the soundtrack—by infiltrating the film and be a part of the visual frame. The mimodiegetic sound desires more than the extradiegetic ambiance music. It wants to unite with its emanating source; an impossible task, but quite an interesting feature for the niche academic to present.

⁶⁰ Ann-Kristin Wallengren, 'En afton på Röda Kvarn,' p. 218.

3. Intermission: The Volodiegetic Level

3.1 *Sui Generis*—The Trains in *One Week* (1920)

Consider the climax in Buster Keaton's *One Week* (1920). As a wedding present Buster and his wife—played by Sybil Seely—have been given a build-it-yourself house. A mischievously jealous former suitor of the wife has manipulated the instructions and, consequently, the completed house draws resemblance from the cubistic art form. Furthermore, the house is constructed on the wrong plot and they are forced to move it. Buster and his wife transport the house as a trailer to the car, and drives through town toward their property. Suddenly the tether breaks and the house comes to a standstill on a railway crossing. Neither of them realizes this and as they consider their options, the film cuts to an advancing train and a close-up of its whistle.

Our characters hear and see the train. In effect, this means that also we in the audience *hear* and see the train. In fact, we become aware of the locomotive moments ahead of them due to an editing choice. Nevertheless, the train is thrust into intradiegetic existence by the two inserted shots. Panic ensues as the newly-weds try to move the house off the tracks. With the train approaching they make a final but ultimately futile attempt to push the building to safety. Admitting defeat, they await the crash embracing each other, with their backs turned. We in the audience await the crash. Using a clever twist, the train runs past on a parallel track, leaving the house standing. Relief is abundant in a medium shot of Buster and wife. Alas, the relief lasts for only a moment. Almost immediately the film cuts to a wide shot and another train from the opposite direction crashes into the wedding gift and wrecks it in a final twist and gag.⁶¹

What we have witnessed is a proper use of the suppressed hearing—an intentional deafness *by editing*. We “heard” and saw the initial train by way of the film cutting and by way of seeing the characters react to it. Train number two, which naturally is as loud as the first, remains unheard. Neither Buster nor his wife reacts to it and thus makes the train non-existent; it is not even extradiegetic. The characters *chose* not to hear; the editor *chose* not to show. This intentional disregard enables the gag to succeed. It also signifies the second train as a diegetic enigma. By contrast, the dog in *Girl Shy* remains intradiegetic but its bark does not. A greater contrast still, is the train in *The Goat*. Keaton knows it arrives and is halting, ostensibly to fight

⁶¹ *One Week* (Joseph M. Schenck Productions; USA; 1920), Dir: Edward F. Cline, Buster Keaton; Photog.: Elgin Lessley. The scene starts at ~00:23:05.

the oncoming police. We do not know; Keaton fools only us. In *One Week*, Keaton decides that his character should not know, and is thus fooling himself as well.

When the first train appeared, we instantly knew it existed within the diegetic world, both aurally and visibly. While the couple struggled to push the house off the tracks, they and we knew and heard the increasing sound of the approaching train. As it passed the house, we heard it fade away out of existence while they watched it beyond the frame. Reality would have it no other way, yet the usage of the second train alters the impossible. This train exists solely within the frame. Since no one hears it while outside the frame, the noise is non-existent outside the frame, intra- or extradiegetic levels notwithstanding. Thus, I argue that the sound is of the sudden and unexpected kind—of ephemeral existence. The moment the train leaves the frame, so does the intradiegetic sound of the train. Why should it fade when it never grew?

The first train has an intradiegetic life beyond the frame, because it is recognized by the characters as part of the fictional world. Consistency plays no part when the second arrives, and its existence resembles, deliberately exaggerated, chemical substances synthesized in a laboratory. Hence, we have an ephemeral sound, its existence determined by its source's existence within the frame. The loudness neither increases nor decreases; it appears and disappears. No argument is made that it is beyond intradiegetic. However, it possesses a volatile quality that allows me to separate and distinguish it from intradiegetic. Having suggested a chemical characteristic, I will venture further and classify it on a *volodiegetic* level, a branch belonging to the diegetic tree. To remain within the etymological flora, I derive it from the word *volatile*'s source in the Latin word *volatilis*, it in turn deriving from *volō*.⁶²

3.2 Reutilizing the Volodiegetic Gag in *Parlor, Bedroom and Bath* (1931)

Eleven years later, Buster Keaton reused the above-mentioned gag in the pre-Code comedy *Parlor, Bedroom and Bath* (1931).⁶³ In the scene, Keaton's protagonist Reginald Irving and fellow passenger Nita Leslie—played by Joan Peers—are cruising down a country road. As faith would have it—since no other reason is given—the left rear wheel falls of its wheel studs. Irving notices with a “Keatonesque” indifference and halts, after a while, neatly on a railway crossing. He gets out and with a scrutinizing look picks up the lost wheel. A cut to an advancing

⁶² Appendix B gives a short definition and reference to the ancient etymological term. Appendix A studies the singular example from *One Week* shot by shot.

⁶³ *Parlor, Bedroom and Bath* (Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer; USA; 1931), Dir: Edward Sedgwick; Photog.: Leonard Smith.

train is made, and then one back to Irving, reacting to it. The movie cuts back to the train again, this time with an accompanying train noise. Realizing where he has parked, he quickly runs over and tries to push the car off the tracks. Meanwhile, Nita is oblivious to the train because a suitcase obscures her view. Another cut back to the train, now closer and louder. Nita is helped out of the car, and Irving grabs their luggage and runs away just as the train passes on a parallel track in a wide shot. While they, in the same shot, take a moment to compose themselves, a second train crashes into their car, pushing it along the track with a resulting pan from the camera (Figure 3.1). It pans back to frame Irving and Nita as they react to their luckless situation. Irving again displays a “Keatonesque” indifference to it all.⁶⁴



Figure 3.1 Reutilizing a volodiegetic gag in *Parlor, Bedroom and Bath*

Before I discuss the volodiegetic level, the incontrovertible fact of the inferior setup has to be acknowledged, as it thwarts the gag. Prominent is the lack of valid reason for the wheel to loosen. In *One Week*, the tether breaks; in *Parlor...* there is no cause. Secondly, Irving does not stop the car immediately. It drives well on three wheels, which leads to the third complication: why not drive the car off the tracks? These faults are not working for the gag, and neither does Nita, at least compared with Seely’s character in *One Week*. Nita is solely a bystander, while Seely reacts and acts simultaneously as Buster, helping him in his effort to move the house off the rails. A final difference, though less of a fault, is the continuous wide shot when the first train passes. Instead of cutting to a medium of the relieved characters—as in *One Week*—the film stays wide. This choice invites an expectation, making the second train less of a surprise for the audience.

Nevertheless, the gag is a facsimile and invokes a volodiegetic reading. It is flawed, however, because the second train is heard before it enters the frame. If it is to be a strict volodiegetic sound, it can only exist when its source is within the frame. Naturally, since

⁶⁴ Ibid. The scene starts at ~00:36:07.

Parlor... is a talkie, a layer of reality is applied. This layer prohibits the deliberate deafening of the characters to work. We hear the second train and can with reason place it as intradiegetic, meaning that the characters cannot selectively ignore it. Our suspension of disbelief would be questioned; how could they not hear? The gag is no longer relying on the inaudible sound. Thus, I claim that this example of the early film language falters and that the volodiegetic sound escapes into the intradiegetic sanctuary. Consider instead, in an effort to save the gag, if the movie solely used the sound as a fertilizer for a thrilling scene, where cuts showed only the couple's steadily increasing panic. Simply, let the talkie do its job and reflect reality!

3.3 Reverberating the Volodiegetic Gag in *The Railrodder* (1965)

Throughout his later career, Buster Keaton seldom refrained from reviving a gag from his silent years. The molasses-gag from *The Butcher Boy* (1917), an informal inauguration of Keaton's primordial persona, was reintroduced to a new audience when the novel television medium entered the stage.⁶⁵ He further reutilized it in *Paradise for Buster* (1952), essentially a pastiche of self-reflective gags. One of his renowned gags, where a house wall collapses on him, originally collapsed on Roscoe Arbuckle in *Back Stage* (1919). Keaton perfected it during the twenties,⁶⁶ and reused it in the short-lived *The Buster Keaton Show* (1951), together with another gag from *Sherlock Jr.* (1924). Early in Keaton's first independently produced film,⁶⁷ *The 'High Sign'* (1921), he is sitting on a bench, unfolding a newspaper. As he unfolds it, it becomes apparent that the paper is larger than usual. When he stands up on the bench to unfold the paper, he ultimately falls and becomes blanketed by the newspaper. Forty-four years later, in November 1965, he and Lucille Ball reenacted the gag in a CBS-show paying tribute to Stan Laurel.

⁶⁵ Keaton performed the molasses-sketch in 1949 on *The Ed Wynn Show*. This was most likely his earliest appearance on TV, as presented by the titular host: "In seeing for the first time, certainly on television—and alive, almost—one of the greatest of the great comedians of the silent moving picture days. Mr. Buster Keaton." He would later perform it in 1951, on the *The Colgate Comedy Hour*, as well.

⁶⁶ *One Week* refined it and with *Steamboat Bill, Jr* (1928) Keaton immortalized it.

⁶⁷ Albeit not released until a year later.

A month earlier, in October 1965, *The Railrodder*, a short film produced by the National Film Board of Canada, premiered in the United States.⁶⁸ It follows Keaton as he travels across the Canadian mainland on a railway trolley, and utilizes his now effloresced persona. One scene imitates the newspaper gag from *The 'High Sign'* but replaces it with a large map. Another scene—and we are finally reaching the volodiegetic occurrence—has the camera tracking a reclined Keaton, reading a magazine on the trolley. We relax with him, accompanied by pleasant music on the extradiegetic track. Without warning, a train enters from the right on a parallel track behind the trolley. The train's horn blasts as it enters, and together with its appearance it results in an alarmed reaction from Keaton.⁶⁹

This is another unexpected train, and it contrasts *Parlor...* by staying within the limits of the definition of the *volodiegetic* level. It exists only when it enters the frame. No sound is heard until it enters, and Keaton does not react until the train is level with him. However, the transition from music score to intradiegetic sound is jarring, if not traumatic. The horn, an aural mimicry of *One Week's* close-up of a steam whistle, introduces an abrupt reality and reshapes the gag from a pure humorous event to one with a trace of shock. Horror films and their jump scares come to mind. While the sound is in accordance with volodiegetic ordinances, the sudden reality transforms the gag; the inevitable reality layer reconstructs it. If *The Railrodder* were a silent film, only Keaton's reaction to the train entering would spark the gag's intention. Thus, a volodiegetic use can transgress the border between early film and talkies.

3.4 Revisualizing the Volodiegetic Gag in *Hook, Line and Stinker* (1958)

Animation liberates the creator from the truths of reality, which is by no means an unmitigated fabrication. A hunter's bullet, for example, merely dislodges a bill of a duck; and pulling a rabbit through a sousaphone raises no eyebrows. Not to mention the anthropomorphic animals riddled throughout the genre's history. In many respects, animation relies on the possibilities granted when the laws of reality are lifted. Without any laws, animation studios could turn a blank page into a new, exclusive codex—a codex that builds a universe that the audience can still embrace. Within this universe a creator can, if so inclined, disregard gravitation, logic, and pain without alienating the audience. Warner Brothers took it upon themselves to distort reality

⁶⁸ *The Railrodder* (National Film Board of Canada; Canada; 1965), Dir: Gerald Potterton; Photog.: Robert Humble.

⁶⁹ *Ibid.* The scene starts at ~00:09:10.

through Looney Tunes. The following example from *Hook, Line and Stinker* (1958) demonstrates a successful gag on the volodiegetic level beyond the borders of early film.⁷⁰

Wile E. Coyote stands on a train track. At this point, the gag is already playing out in the audiences' mind. I have reason to come back to this. He is placing birdseeds as bait for the elusive Road Runner (to evade, as is praxis). However, the evasive fowl never gets a chance to taste the birdseeds. Naturally, a train enters the frame—as everybody knew it would—from the right and hits the luckless Mr. Coyote (Figure 3.2). The train is not heard until the moment before it enters the picture, when its whistle blows. It is a setup that *The Railrodder* replicated seven years later, with the difference that no one expected another train. In *Hook...*, everybody waited for a train and that makes the gag successful. Still a volodiegetic gag, but it has been revisualized. No longer is the unexpected train the gag; the gag is the *expected* train. Thus, the volodiegetic sound refrains from inducing a traumatic feeling and argues for a practical, animated use of the early film language.

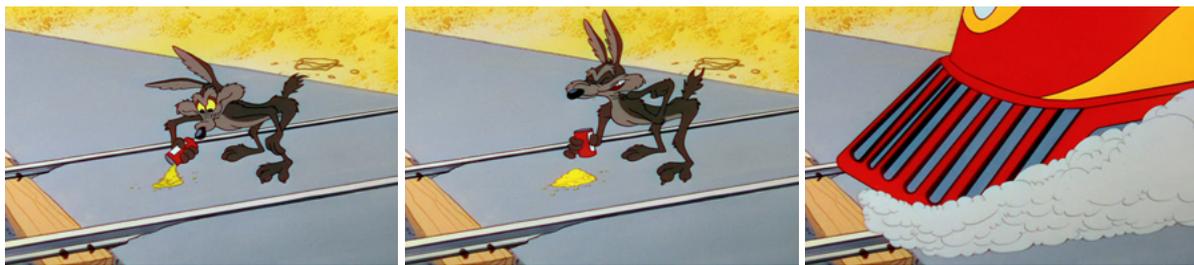


Figure 3.2 Revisualizing a volodiegetic gag in the animated *Hook, Line and Stinker*

⁷⁰ *Hook, Line and Stinker* (Warner Brothers; USA; 1958), Dir: Chuck Jones; Photog.: N/A. The scene starts at ~00:02:10.

4. Part II: Projecting an Early Film

4.1 The Conundrum with Variable Frame Rates

Let us begin with the advert. In 1914, D.W. Griffith took out a full-page advertisement in *Moving Picture World*—among other industry magazines, surely—urging its readers to watch “The Ultimate Achievement in Heart-Throb Photo Drama,” his six-reel “masterpiece” *Home, Sweet Home* (1914). Ignoring the palpitate-inducing proclamation, we find a smaller, text-filled box inserted further down on the page, which is more relevant. In it, the ad recommends any projectionists reading that the cadence of the projection will matter, in turn to reach the optimal cardiac rhythm. After all, the ad proclaims that the movie aims “to do more than make money alone—it aims to uplift and ennoble the entire photodramatic art.”⁷¹ The text-box reads: “Mr. Griffith suggests that the running time for the picture should be:—16 M. for the first reel, 14 M. to 15 M. for the second reel and from 13 M. to 14 M. for each of the other reels. The last reel, however, should be run slowly from the beginning of the allegorical part to the end.”

If *Home, Sweet Home* indeed ennobled anything is quite subjective. I will only bring to attention that Griffith wanted his drama to be projected at certain speeds. The first reel has a suggested run time of 16 minutes, for example. It takes one minute for 90 feet of 35 mm four-perforated film to travel across the lens at sound speed, i.e., 24 fps.⁷² If we multiply the six reels with the constant time of 16 minutes, the product gives us a reasonable running time of the movie, i.e., 96 minutes. With this, we can conclude that the movie came on reels with a thousand feet each. Anything else—500 feet or 2000 feet—would make the running time either too short or too long. As a reference point, we can refer to the actual movie, now in public domain and playing for 55 minutes.⁷³

⁷¹ Continental Feature Film Corp. 'Home, Sweet Home' [Advertisement]. *The Moving Picture World*. Vol. 20, No. 12. 20 June (1914), p. 1652.

⁷² $(24 \text{ fps} * 60\text{s}) / 16 \text{ frames} = 90 \text{ feet per minute}$. 16 frames is what one foot of 35 mm film with four perforations contains.

⁷³ k-otic, 'Home, Sweet Home' [Web Video]. Published 4 Aug 2011, *Internet Archive*. [Accessed 21 October 2016, offline copy in author's possession. URL in Biblio.]. There is no information as to whether this copy is complete or a 16 mm reductive version. However, if we re-calculate the fps from its constant 29 to a constant 17 fps, the running time lengthens to ~94 minutes, which should ease our minds as to the completeness of the copy, as well as it being a 35 mm copy.

The difference between 55 minutes and 96 minutes is significant. The latter running time is with the constant speed of 16 minutes per reel, i.e., a fraction faster than 16 fps.⁷⁴ Something is amiss. With a running time of 55 minutes, the public domain-copy is projected at a rate of 29.97 fps.⁷⁵ This is not what the director had in mind. Griffith envisioned an *increasing* speed as the movie progressed, from the first reel's 16.5 fps, through the second and third at 19-18 to the fourth and fifth at 20.5 and 19.⁷⁶ This indicates usage of different camera speeds on location, barring the natural fluctuation a hand-cranked camera produces. It further suggests that Griffith took the time to direct his performers to adjust their pace accordingly. Therefore, a scene shot in 16 fps with a natural pace from the performers is not equal to a scene shot at the same speed but with molasses-like movements. The outcome, if projected at, e.g., 16 fps, will be distinctive. Consequently, varying projection speeds for each reel will give the motion a refined pace to Griffith's liking.

Having dissected the advertisement, we can observe the common practice of variable frame rates. Brownlow's investigations, Walter Kerr's notions and Ben Model's experiments all support this practice. In 2002, Timothy Barnard presented an overview in the article 'The "Machine Operator": Deus Ex Machina of the Storefront Cinema,' in which he paints a vivid picture of the impact a projectionist had on the film with his or her "divine" intervention. The final paragraph reflects on the total invisibility of the present-day projectionist—if present at all. Barnard questioned if the profession would cease to exist, owing to the, then, imminent rise of digital feeds.⁷⁷

Industry sources from yesteryear further establish the method referred to above as commonplace. Georges Méliès writes: "The images are taken at a speed of 12, 16, or 18

⁷⁴ $(16 \text{ fps} * 60\text{s}) / 16 \text{ frames} = 60 \text{ feet per minute.}$

⁷⁵ 29.97 fps is a result from when NTSC TV where broadcast in the 60i format (60 interlaced *fields* per second) via two carriers: one for black-and-white, one for color. Initially, only the former was needed and 60 was a nice, round number and gave 30 *frames* per second. To separate the signals and avoid interference when color TV was introduced, 60i were reduced by a factor of 1000/1001 (60/1.001) and thus gave 59,94 fields. Divide by two and we get 29.97 frames per second.

⁷⁶ The point-five increments are not necessarily a proper frame rate representation, but the calculations give me no other choice if I want to reflect them.

⁷⁷ Timothy Barnard, 'The "Machine Operator": Deus Ex Machina of the Storefront Cinema', *Framework: The Journal of Cinema and Media*, 43/1 (2002), pp. 40-75.

second...depending on the speed of the object being photographed.”⁷⁸ Frank Herbert Richardson notes in a chapter entitled ‘Speed’ in a handbook for theatre owners that “theoretically, the machine speed should be the same as that of the camera which took the picture being projected, but in practice this is often far from true. The camera man grinds out a set speed, supposed to be sixty feet per minute, though often he varies widely from the mark.”⁷⁹ Twelve years later, in 1922, Richardson stated that “by a change in the speed of projection the projectionist is enabled to alter the whole effect of any given scene, insofar as concerns the audience.”⁸⁰ The reels of film are literally placed in the hands of the projectionists; however, with such a freedom to control the cadence comes the problems of managerial interference. If theatre owners had the possibility to squeeze in an extra show on behalf of the earlier show’s quickened pace, they would do so.

Lastly, a paragraph about the camera operator’s responsibilities on set: as we have seen, the shooting speed was far from regular and fluctuated according to the scene or object that was photographed. Dynamically changing the speed required not only knowledge of the cadence, but also knowledge of exposures depending on the shutter and f-stop. L. Sprague Anderson describes in a 1996 issue of the *Operating Cameraman* magazine how dynamic shooting would work:

Let’s say our star...intends to put on a display of fancy swordsmanship. He walks across the set at normal rate, draws his sword with a flourish, and then (as the operator slows his crank) executes a rapid series of thrusts, parries and ripostes with the blade. His swordsmanship completed, he sheathes his weapon (the operator now returns to normal rate) and exits before the awed eyes of the watching crowd.⁸¹

When projected, the swordsmanship will appear dazzling. However, the exposure must remain constant. “If the scene suddenly brightens by half a stop or more during the swordplay, then returns to normal,” Anderson writes, “the trick” is revealed. To avoid this, the camera operator,

⁷⁸ André Gaudreault, *Film and Attraction: From Kinematography to Cinema* (Urbana, Ill.: University of Illinois Press, 2011), p. 137.

⁷⁹ F. H. Richardson, *Motion Picture Handbook: A Guide for Managers and Operators of Motion Picture Theatres* (New York City: The Moving Picture World, 1910), p. 103.

⁸⁰ F. H. Richardson, *Richardson's Handbook of Projection for Theatre Managers and Motion Picture Projectionists* (4th edn.; New York City: Chalmers Publishing Company, 1922), p. 214.

⁸¹ L. Sprague Anderson, 'Hand Cranking', *Operating Cameraman*, 6/1 (1996), p. 12.

while changing the frame rate, “must compensate for the changing exposure...either by simultaneously decreasing the angle of the dissolving shutter or by simultaneously decreasing the stop.”⁸² No small feat—with enough quaver the shot is ruined. Naturally, the same applies if the swordfight is replaced by a farcical chase, for example. Suddenly, Leonard Maltin’s view that comedy is not science and a gag is not a formula becomes less solid. Dynamic shooting will be further examined in chapter five. What follows relates to what happens when the dynamic footage is projected.

4.2 Mistreating the Film

As we have seen, speed was not at a constant rate, neither when projecting nor when photographing. This brought a freedom to the creators. They could manipulate the frame rate to serve their visions or gags. I will now turn my attention to the problems encountered when the freedom was exploited for a profit. This focus will end in a discussion whether this problem still exists, and if so, in what form. It is my intention to lead with this troublesome business before focusing on the probable esthetic utilizations in films.

At a meeting for Motion Picture Engineers in 1926, Lewis R. Townsend, then a Projection Engineer at the Eastman Theatre in Rochester, presented to the participants his austere perspective on the workings of a projectionist in a talk aptly called ‘Problems of a Projectionist.’⁸³ Beyond the issues of excessively waxed perforations, scratched film, worn-out reels, and unclear reel ends, Townsend declaimed the difficulty to assemble a two hour-program. He and his co-workers deemed it well-rounded to have a program consisting of a ten minute-overture, a 1000 foot weekly, a comedic two-reeler, a five- or ten-minute act, and a feature at 8000 foot to culminate the presentation.⁸⁴ Intuition tells us that this is pushing it. Calculating a thousand foot at sound speed, which equals roughly eleven minutes, confirms our hunch. If everything ran at 24 fps, a program would last twenty minutes longer than allowed.

Naturally, no leeway was given to adhere to a director’s instructions regarding projection speeds. Townsend and coworkers solved it “by cutting.... It is gone over, reel by reel, and we take out only minor incidents which do not have a direct bearing on the story and unnecessary detail or padding, of which there is usually a great sufficiency.” A merciless solution, indeed.

⁸² Ibid.

⁸³ Lewis R. Townsend, 'Problems of a Projectionist', in *Transactions of the Society of Motion Picture Engineers*, No. 25-28 (Volume IX; New York City: The Society, 1926), p. 79.

⁸⁴ Ibid., p. 82.

He does realize that “Producers and exchange managers object to having their pictures cut,” but remonstrate them for their incapability to produce films with a to the Eastman Theatre optimal run time.⁸⁵ Of all the obstacles Townsend needs to clear in order to project a film, he himself constitutes a problem. His approach would deprive the paying customer of several minutes of film.

The Society of Motion Picture Engineers did not solely consist of self-appointed editors and padding experts. One member asked if not the distributors are better suited to trim away “unnecessary details,” while another blatantly said that the theatre has no business cutting frames: “The picture is properly cut in the studio and is in complete form.” F.H. Richardson, however, cannot remember when he last saw “a production on the screen that would not be benefited by eliminating footage.” Richardson’s reason for trimming the reels, however, is only to avoid “overspeeding.”⁸⁶

A few months later, the discussion continued. Richard Rowland, President of First National Pictures, noted that exhibitors often projected a film with a popular star at a higher rate of speed, in order to squeeze in another show. Sometimes a producer “cut the picture to a slower tempo to meet this condition; and the vicious circle is continued.” A vicious circle broken, if Rowland gets his way, by labelling the reel bands. “It stands to reason that, if there is no definite running speed indicated, the exhibitor must rely on his own judgment or that of his projectionist. He no doubt could easily determine the proper speed himself, if he had the time, but if the projectionist has the proper directions before him in black and white, he will be far more likely to follow them.” Richardson agrees and says that improper speeds have ridiculed countless films more “than by any other one thing.” Rowland heartily suggests applying labels at the beginning of the reels, but warns that “The greatest difficulty about the proposition is the determination of the proper speed for a given film, because a uniform speed for all motion pictures would not be practicable or satisfactory.” The orchestra can play exquisitely, the marketing be superb and the lobby décor magnificent, “but the heart of the whole thing, the kernel in the nut, the basis of the program, the real excuse for the theater’s existence—the picture—is too often marred because it is run either too fast or too slowly.”⁸⁷

⁸⁵ Ibid.

⁸⁶ Ibid., p. 87 f.

⁸⁷ Richard Rowland, 'The Speed of Projection of Film', in *Transactions of the Society of Motion Picture Engineers*, No. 25-28 (Volume X; New York City: The Society, 1927), pp. 77-79.

4.3 *Home, Sweet Home* (1914)

Presenting an episodic film, Griffith set out to introduce the actor and playwright John Howard Payne's work in a "not biographical but photo-dramatic and allegorical" film, in which Payne's "immortal song" *Home! Sweet Home!* acts as a link between the acts.⁸⁸ Griffith included five parts with different actors in each segment. In the first story, which acts as a prologue, we see Payne live a miserable life, and in anguish, eventually writes *Home! Sweet Home!* before passing away.⁸⁹ Parts two to four—episodes one through three—depicts situations where Payne's song helps people remember times of happiness. Often the song is heard in the beginning of the episode, with a character reminiscing about it at the end. An epilogue ties everything together and asks "For countless services like these shall not his [Payne's] faults be forgiven?" As Payne struggles to "rise from the pit of evil," an angel comes forth and relieves Payne from the pull from the "Masters [Carnality, Brutality, and Worldly]."⁹⁰

It is reasonable to argue that Griffith intended the five episodes to be run at different speeds, as per the advertisement. According to his advert, the first reel should run for 16 minutes, which equals 16.5 fps. Each 1000 foot-reel contains 16000 frames, which makes it easy to find the breaking points for the reels in a post-production software program. My preference is found in Adobe's After Effects (AE), and will thus be used when the thesis calls for it. Luckily, the public domain copy contains 99118 frames, which makes this copy complete.⁹¹ Once the first 16000 frames are selected, they can be interpreted in AE at 16.5 fps.⁹² Proceeding, we can determine the next reel at 19 fps. Thus, at roughly the 31000th frame, the prologue ends and episode one begins. Looking at the public domain-copy, these 31000 frames take 17 minutes to run. Per Griffith's instruction and urge, they should play for about 29½

⁸⁸ *Home, Sweet Home* (Majestic Motion Picture Company, Reliance Film Company; USA; 1914), Dir: D. W. Griffith; Photog.: G.W. Bitzer. The intertitles appear at ~00:00:07.

⁸⁹ The film takes some liberties in presenting Payne's life and omits the thirty-odd years between Payne writing *Home! Sweet Home!* and his death.

⁹⁰ *Home, Sweet Home* (1914). The Epilogue starts at ~00:52:22 in the public domain-copy.

⁹¹ 99118 frames even need more than six reels: $99118/6=16519.66\dots$ Between 6.1 and 6.2 reels, in fact, but this excludes any retrofitted frames added as padding pre and post the public domain copy.

⁹² By right-clicking on an imported file and choosing the menu item 'Interpret footage -> Main...', one can change the frame rate of the entire said file to one's liking. Another method to interpret the frame rate is to add the original file to the timeline, cut the file where the cuts are made in the film, bring up the 'preview'-window and enter a desired frame rate. By limiting the work area, a single cut can be run continuously in order to find the the shooting speed likely used.

minutes. If we look at episode one, there is an eight minute-difference between the copies. When part three starts in Griffith's version, there are five minutes left of the public domain-copy. As Griffith's version reaches part four, the public domain-audience are on their way home. Finally, the epilogue begins roughly half an hour after curtains on the public domain-copy. I will not detail the visual and emotional differences this produces. My intention is to emphasize the contrast, and in the following sub-chapter, I discuss how difficult it is today to honor Griffith's wishes.

4.3.1 *Home, Sweet Home* Anno 2017

The public domain-copy—or any other digital copy—cannot natively project each of these frame rates to accommodate D.W. Griffith's wishes. It was possible during the early era—at least when the projectors were hand-cranked—if a theatre manager decides to abide by the requests, that is. From a technical point of view, however, it is now impossible to adhere to Griffith's instructions. Ironically, the technical advances in film production since the Thirties are a monumental achievement, but to project films made earlier than that is problematic.

Regarding projection at a theatre via a DCP, the additional frame rates of 16, 18, 20 and 22—what Nicola Mazzanti and colleagues call the Archival Frame Rates—are available as constant speeds. A DCP is built up by audio and video files that are controlled by an accompanying text file, which communicates with the projector and contains, among other things, the specific frame rates. Thus, it is at least possible to approach Griffith's intention by projecting *Home, Sweet Home* at an average speed of 18 or 20 fps—if the projector is capable. According to Nicola Mazzanti, the Archival Frame Rates standard is not mandatory for projector manufactures, but it is possible to create reels within the text file and give each reel a set speed.⁹³ The Digital Cinema System Specification agrees, but the latest available version does not mention different speeds on each reel.⁹⁴ Projectors capable of running the Archival Frame Rates are still limited to the constant rates, but it is a step closer to Griffith's desires. Thankfully, a DCP prevents unauthorized parties to “take out only minor incidents which do not have a direct bearing on the story and unnecessary detail or padding, of which there is usually a great sufficiency,” as Lewis R. Townsend said he and his colleagues did.

⁹³ Nicola Mazzanti, 'Silent Frame Rates and DCP' [Blog Post].

⁹⁴ LLC Digital Cinema Initiatives, 'Digital Cinema System Specification Version 1.2 with Errata as of 30 August 2012 Incorporated' [PDF Document]. Published 10 October 2012, *Digital Cinema Initiatives*. [Accessed 11 April 2017, offline copy in author's possession. URL in Biblio.]. P. 24.

Home, Sweet Home constitutes only one example out of a plethora of films where a director intended for a specific projection. Other films, that are solely dependent on a higher, constant frame rate, should the technology be able to accommodate for.

5. Part III: Variable Frame Rates as a Gag Creation Tool

5.1 Ben Model's Smoking Gun

As I stated in my introduction, Ben Model and his research constitutes a large part of my chosen topic for this thesis. His explorations with different frame rates in early films, especially comedy film, opened up an intriguing possibility to discover a film language that is more contrived than earlier thought. Working as a film historian, accompanist, and independent distributor of silent films, Ben Model has studied numerous films and their creators' use of variable frame rates. What began with the aforementioned employment scene in Chaplin's *A Dog's Life* continued in a selection of educational videos and a journal article, as previously discussed. Model states in his article that few, if any, sources are available that claim this was a common practice. After a lecture in 2013, however, a fellow historian approached Model with a source, a "smoking gun," as he calls it.⁹⁵ In an excerpt from the 14th edition of *Encyclopedia Britannica*, published 1929, the actor Milton Sills explains how an actor needs to "adopt a more deliberate tempo" and "learn to time his action in accordance with the requirements of the camera."⁹⁶

In this chapter, I will examine films where this use of a deliberate tempo, together with its co-agent in a variable frame rate, enhances the action. To achieve this, I will use the tools made available in Adobe's AE. What I will look for are movements that look and feel natural. If, for instance, smoke puffing out from a chimney on a train engine looks natural, the current frame rate should be the shooting speed. To ascertain the shooting speed in another way, one can judge the walking pace of pedestrians, or other activities that gravitationally "feels" correct. As we will see, the variable frame rate not only aids in a snappier action, but it also aids in "hiding" the force with which somebody falls on his back, for example.

Furthermore, AE displays the frame rate of the file in use and thus discloses what the source's projection speed is. Let me stress that this should not be considered an infallible method of determining the frame rate used. To reiterate Kevin Brownlow's caution when he performed his experiments: "Everyone has a slightly different sense of rhythm."⁹⁷ Nevertheless,

⁹⁵ Ben Model, 'Undercranking's "Smoking Gun" Courtesy of Milton Sills' [Blog Post]. Published 18 Sept 2013, *Silent Film Music Blog*. [Accessed 24 March 2017, offline copy in author's possession. URL in Biblio.]

⁹⁶ *Encyclopedia Britannica*, 14th edn. (New York: Encyclopædia Britannica, Inc., 1929), s.v. 'Motion Picture Acting'. Quoted in Ben Model, 'Undercranking's "Smoking Gun"' [Blog Post].

⁹⁷ Kevin Brownlow, 'Silent Films: What Was the Right Speed?', p. 165.

I will use a technically more precise method than Brownlow's—and an equal, if not more precise, program that Model used—and should hence be able to approximate the shooting speed well.

5.2 *Neighbors* (1920)

Buster Keaton uses variable frame rates in his fourth produced film *Neighbors* (1920) to quicken the action, hide a stunt and seemingly vanish in an instant. Much of the story takes place in a backyard, where a wooden fence separates The Boy's (Buster Keaton) and The Girl's (Virginia Fox) houses. Their love is separated only by the fence and their fathers' loathing of one another. Undeterred by this, the boy makes his way to the girl's window on the third floor. Immediately he is discovered by the girl's father and escapes through the window, glides across the clothes lines and into his own house, where he, at kept momentum and unstoppable, slides down the banister to the second floor and out through the window. Another set of clothes lines takes him across the yard and in through the second floor window, finally colliding with an immovable object: the girl's father.⁹⁸

Watching this at projected speed, Keaton's journey between the houses flows steadily and in a pace suited for such a gag. If we dissect and examine each cut and its shooting speed, the setup and preparation is noticeable. Initially, Keaton's escape: at projected speed, 24 fps, it only takes a moment for him to grip tight of the lines and shoot across the yard. Looking at the scene at shooting speed, 14 fps, it becomes clear that he securely grips what probably is a pulley hidden behind a shirt hung to dry. He proceeds to gain momentum by pulling the pulley back and travel along when it moves forward again. As he enters his own house, the film cuts to the interior. What appears to be a continuous, fast movement at projected speed is carefully done at shooting speed. Cranking even slower, at 10 fps, the camera operator allows Keaton to navigate safely down the curved banister. Once again, the film cuts when Keaton moves from interior to exterior. The second journey by a clothes line is completed on his stomach, to accommodate for the angle at which he declines the banister. Merely eight frames per second takes Keaton across the yard, still with a probable aid of a pulley, but now on a plank to move seemingly from the banister to the clothes line seamlessly. This sequence, five seconds long, exemplifies what can be done with a variable frame rate; in *Neighbors*, to quicken the action.

⁹⁸ *Neighbors* (Joseph M. Schenck Productions; USA; 1920), Dir: Edward F. Cline, Buster Keaton; Photog.: Elgin Lessley. The scene starts at ~00:02:20.

Furthermore, examining it at shooting speed, we can deduce the planning that was necessary to accomplish the gag and stunt.

Later in the film, after several mishaps, Keaton is apprehended by a police officer. Leading him along a sidewalk, they turn a corner and walk past a telephone pole. More precisely, the officer walks past it; Keaton slams into it, does a backwards somersault and ends up in the gutter.⁹⁹ Meanwhile, the officer managed to leave the frame before realizing that his detainee dropped off. This was shot at 14 fps and by examining it, the choreography is discernable. As Keaton collides with the pole, he lifts his left hand to absorb the force of the collision. The officer waits outside the frame long enough for Keaton to perform his somersault and land in the gutter. Only then is the officer allowed back in the frame (Figure 5.1). Keep the focus on the funny man! Here we have seen the potential of a slower frame rate: it hides a hidden shock absorber and a choreographed frame re-entry by the officer. The final example from *Neighbors* demonstrates how a different shooting speed can give a character a burst of energy to propel him out of sight instantaneously.



Figure 5.1 Buster Keaton absorbs a collision and somersaults in *Neighbors*

Having collected Keaton from the gutter, they continue to move down the sidewalk. Earlier in the film, a bucket filled with black color is upended over Keaton's head. Thus, he was drenched in it when the police officer initially arrested him. Now, as they walk down the pathway, Keaton wipes half his face clean with his free hand. They soon reach a phone box and the officer begins to call the headquarter. While he does so, Keaton turns on the spot to present his clean side to the officer, who does a double take as Keaton spins again, revealing the black side of his face. Another two spins and the officer recoils in horror and turns away. In the interim, Keaton climbs a telephone pole just outside the frame. No more than a second later the officer composes

⁹⁹ Ibid. The scene starts at ~00:06:08.

himself but finds that his prisoner is gone. He runs down the empty street as Keaton climbs down from the pole, thus eluding the law.¹⁰⁰

What the slower shooting speed at 14 fps reveals is the lightning-quick turns on a dime that Keaton does to present his facial halves. The climb up the telephone pole is blazingly quick, but that is more a testimony to Keaton's acrobatics than anything else. Taken together, these sequences from *Neighbors* demonstrate the possibilities of a variable frame rate. They further demonstrate a knowledge with which the creator can manipulate them to their advantage. Practicing this manipulation permits not only a quicker action and the opportunity to hide choreography. It also enables the creator to exploit physics and our sense of weight, as we shall see in the next sub-chapter.

5.3 *Easy Street* (1917)

Charles Chaplin was one of the first comedians who quickly gained control over the filmmaking process, and he managed to keep that control throughout his career. Chaplin's directorial debut came when he was still at Keystone, working for Mack Sennett. During his stay at Sennett's comedy factory, Chaplin cranked out films every week and rarely had time to develop his own style. This changed when he moved to Essanay and an even greater control was given him at Mutual. *Easy Street* (1917) was Chaplin's ninth film for the Mutual Film Corporation and opens with the Derelict—Chaplin's tramp—sleeping outside a mission. Venturing inside after hearing the inspiring piano and choral song, he finds meaning and is inspired by the attractive piano player, played by Edna Purviance. A while later, the tramp is employed as a policeman and is assigned Easy Street, the main thoroughfare in the unruly ghetto of the city.

The film introduces Eric Campbell as The Bully, a one-man ruler of the street, terrorizing the locals. Enter the tramp, who immediately gets the attention of the bully the moment he treads the pavement of Easy Street. Being an enemy of the law, the tension steadily rises as the bully patrols alongside the tramp. When he reaches a police telephone box attached to a lamppost, the tramp does everything he can to pick up the receiver without the bully noticing. A hard feat, since he is breathing down the tramp's neck. Every movement toward the receiver is met by a reaction from the bully. Their interaction culminates when the bully demonstrates his strength by bending the lamppost at an almost horizontal level with the street. Thinking

¹⁰⁰ Ibid. At ~00:06:18.

quickly, the tramp traps the bully's head in the gas lamp and renders him senseless. Backup arrives and the bully is taken to the police station.¹⁰¹

In a fit of rage, the bully disposes of seven policemen and handles them as rag dolls.¹⁰² In fact, one of them is. Projected at 24 fps,¹⁰³ this is difficult to notice. The speed aids in obscuring the weight of an object which we normally can sense, if not determine. Watching the scene at shooting speed, 12 fps, the doll is difficult to miss, as it is flung across the room. Since the camera manipulates gravity and mass, the audience never feels the crashing weight. A convenience and advantage to the early era filmmakers. Every brick, every punch, and every pratfall is never felt. Add to these a corresponding sound effect—e.g. a drum hit or a twang—that further obscures the full weight. The violence suddenly seems innocuous. It should not; a brick to a head is no laughing matter, but the altered sense of weight and a hi-hat transform the implication. Following this, the bully is later in the film subdued again by the tramp. Having used the gas gag, he turns to an oven that he heaves through a second floor-window onto the bully's head. Naturally something that in a synchronized sound film would be felt in the theatre—perhaps together with an uneasy shuffle in the seat.

Later in the film, Edna Purviance's character is kidnapped and held hostage in a basement. With the unintentional aid of a drug injection, the now euphoric tramp rescues her and simultaneously knocks out the gang responsible.¹⁰⁴ Swift justice is served as he swings hither and thither, sending a handful of criminals crashing into a table with a kick while jumping high in the air. The remaining thugs attack him from all angles and he throws, hits and evades their attempts. This sequence is beautifully choreographed when slowed down and examined at shooting speed.

Chaplin's initial high jump and one-footed kick is nothing less than impressive. Shot at 14 fps, his leg is parallel to the floor and level with the thugs' faces. Not noticeable at projected speed is his landing. From such a high position, landing on the floor flat on his back is no small feat. The higher rate obscures Chaplin's weight. At 24 fps, we are robbed of our sense of gravity

¹⁰¹ *Easy Street* (Lone Star Corporation; USA; 1917), Dir: Charles Chaplin; Photog.: William C. Foster, Roland Totheroh. The scene starts at ~00:08:58.

¹⁰² *Ibid.* The scene starts at ~00:17:40.

¹⁰³ Since I analyze the Blu-ray version of the film, it is technically 23.976 fps. Blu-ray does indeed support “true” 24 fps, but DVDs and NTSC systems, e.g., does not. For a distribution company to produce several versions when 23.976 is more widely accepted (DVD, Blu-ray, NTSC, PAL), would be, I assume, uneconomical.

¹⁰⁴ *Easy Street* (1917). At ~00:24:00.

and thus do not squirm at the obviously painful fall. When the thugs recover from the kick, they retaliate. Chaplin, with the adrenaline still running high, dodges a punch from one, hits another, throws a third, evades the first thug again and hits a fifth. All this in one fluid motion at projected speed, but the meticulous staging is revealed at shooting speed, 16 fps.

As he dodges the first punch, Chaplin transforms his motion into his first punch, striking a thug at the collarbone. Twisting his body, he recoils from the strike and, without looking, grabs the arm of another assailant coming up from behind him. With a practiced movement, he throws him over his shoulder. This looks easy at projected speed, but at 16 fps, we can see Chaplin struggling with the weight of the thug, together with the full weight of the thug landing on the floor. Standing up, Chaplin looks at the next thug in line—as to give him a cue—who proceeds to attack, only for Chaplin to crouch and let him roll over his back and land on the floor. He stands up from his crouching position, pauses for a fraction of a second to find his next target, and promptly strikes him. Across 234 frames run at 16 fps, what Ben Model found in *A Dog's Life* is evident in *Easy Street* as well: “The slower, choreographed movement, the additional pauses laid in, the full weight of the bodies rushing about.”¹⁰⁵ Adjusting the frame rate to accompany the action in the scene allows for the brawl just described to seem fluid at projected speed. It is also striking how the weight and gravity change the perception of the scene. No longer is it necessarily a brawl where people are hurt; it is rather a comedic brawl where the thugs simply “are dealt with.”

Easy Street provides an example of how gravity and weight can be manipulated by a variable frame rate. In the next sub-chapter, I will describe dynamic shooting used to *hide* this fluctuating frame rate.

5.4 *Ask Father* (1919)

The plot is simple: the boy—played by Harold Lloyd—courts a lovely girl who promptly tells him to “ask father.” For the remaining ten minutes of the film,¹⁰⁶ Lloyd attempts to do precisely this. He chases the father to his office, but the employees put a stop to Lloyd’s eagerness. Thrown out, he devises a handful of plots to get back inside the office. Every try is met with the same resistance: if he passes the outer room and its two bouncers, the employee supervisor

¹⁰⁵ Ben Model, “Undercranking”: The Magic Behind the Slapstick’, p. 23.

¹⁰⁶ My copy runs at 29.97 fps and is 13 minutes long. Run at 18 fps, e.g., the film would take roughly 21 minutes to play.

restrains him in the next room. Disguised as a lady, he manages to enter the third room where the father sits, but only to be discovered and sent out by a conveyor belt in the floor. It sends him straight into the arms of the supervisor, who has had enough. While he rolls up his sleeves and gets ready to fight, Lloyd walks back in to the third room. With the conveyor belt still on, it becomes more and more difficult to stay put. Meanwhile, the film intercuts the supervisor preparing for a tussle. More troublesome still, the belt gains speed. Soon he is running just to stay level with the soon-to-be father-in-law's desk. Finally, he loses his footing, shoots out through the door and knocks over the supervisor, who then proceeds to throw him into the arms of the bouncers, who throw him out in the hallway.¹⁰⁷

There are 18 cuts in the sequence running from the moment the conveyor-belt starts until Lloyd is laying on the hallway-floor. By using the frame rate-tools described earlier, we can see that the shooting speed alters between cuts. This is an advantage for the filmmakers, since it is not noticeable when projected at a constant 24 or 29.97 fps. In the first cut, at 22 fps, Lloyd leans on the desk, slams his hand on it and starts declaring his love for the father's daughter while the belt takes him away. His hand slamming the desk is likely a cue to start the belt, something one might not consider at projected speed but is perceptible when analyzing the cut at a lower rate. Here, again, we have choreography in play, albeit on a smaller scale than *Easy Street's* brawl.

As Lloyd ends his proclamation of love, he discovers that he is face to face with the supervisor. Lloyd immediately turns and walks back in. This is a short cut consisting of 74 frames and establishes itself at 22 fps. Back in the room in cut number three, the shooting speed is now 18 fps when Lloyd walks up to the desk. He struggles with the belt, which has increased in speed, and an insert of the supervisor—cut number four at 22 fps—interjects his continued struggle in cut five, at 18 fps, which is interjected by another insert of the supervisor at 20 fps. Cut seven further shows Lloyd's struggle and remains at 18 fps as he tries again to express his love. Via another insert at 22 fps of the increasingly furious supervisor, we get to cut nine, where things are accelerating. At 14 fps, Lloyd removes his hat to indicate the belt's speed change (Figure 5.2). Projecting this at 29.97 fps, or even 24, the belt appears to run at lightning speed—and Lloyd keeping up with it. Outside the room, in cut number eleven, the supervisor is fuming at 20 fps. We reach climax in cut twelve, fittingly at 12 fps, in which Lloyd finally loses his footing and tumbles out from the room. To my eye, Lloyd crashes into the supervisor's

¹⁰⁷ *Ask Father* (The Rolin Film Company; USA; 1919), Dir: N/A; Photog.: N/A. The scene starts at ~00:06:40.

legs and trips him at 16 fps. The weight of the supervisor's legs hitting the floor seems natural at this rate. Once again, I should emphasize that this is not a waterproof method. Legs hitting the floor at 16 fps might be natural at 18 fps for another viewer. Nevertheless, there *is* a change in shooting speed, and that is my primary focus here.

Next cut, number thirteen, shows the first room and a switchboard operator worried about Lloyd. Estimating where he will subsequently land, she places a pillow so to protect him from the hard floor. She does this at 20 fps and the following cut remains at 20 as the supervisor gets up after the collision and throws Lloyd out from the frame. He does a summersault into the next cut and lands on the pillow, with the frame rate still at 20. One of the bouncers sees an opportunity to throw him still further and Lloyd grabs the pillow and throws it out in the hallway as a precaution. Cut sixteen shows the pillow landing in the hall. Number seventeen, shot at 18 fps, shows the bouncer throw Lloyd out, and the final shot sees him land on the pillow at 20 fps.



Figure 5.2 Three adjoining shots filmed at 18, 22 and 14 fps. When Ask Father is projected at 24 fps, the intrascenic change in speed becomes moot

Altogether, this sequence runs for roughly two minutes and ten seconds. Within these minutes, six different frame rates are present, none of which is obvious when watching at projected speed. These variations would have been noticeable if this had been a synchronized sound film. Twelve and fourteen frames per second would equal the use of slow motion today. Furthermore, the sound in a synchronized film would not be able to synchronize with that amount of frame rate variation—unless the ADR and Foley departments surpass themselves. Slow motion is, of course, a perfectly fine tool, but any coinciding sound recorded will be distorted. Being able as a filmmaker to change the speed depending on the scene, and hide the practice with a faster projection speed, is no longer possible. The filmmakers “took advantage of this practice,” writes Ben Model, “to create gags and stunts that could only exist in this silent-film universe.... It was

a universe that disappeared like a puff of smoke when synchronized sound came into use.”¹⁰⁸
In the next chapter, I will argue that the universe was befogged rather than evanesced.

¹⁰⁸ Ben Model, "'Undercranking': The Magic Behind the Slapstick", p. 23.

6. Part IV: Contemporary Use of the Early Film Language

6.1 Available Methods Based on Tools Described

In this penultimate chapter, I analyze six films produced after the early era became passé. No particular limitation is considered and the films are chosen partly because they have a connection to the early era—or venerates the period—and partly because they simply were readily available. I use the different methods detailed in the previous chapter: Do contemporary silent and non-dialogue films use suppressed sound? Do sound and a silent layer interplay? Are the diegetic levels of *volodiegetic* and *mimodiegetic* present? Which frame rates are used, and do they vary or remain constant, i.e., is dynamic shooting employed? Thus, the focus here is to search for early era techniques that define a contemporary film as an early film. This goes beyond the definition of an early film as monochrome, with intertitles, and extradiegetic sound audible to the audience. What follows are case studies of multiple scenes from a broad selection of contemporary films, all of which in some fashion present themselves as early films.

6.2 *The Artist* (2011)

One of the recent homages to Hollywood dazumal is *The Artist* (2011), written and directed by Michel Hazanavicius. When it premiered, critics labeled it as a “love letter to classic cinema,”¹⁰⁹ a film that will “cleave to the rules of the game,”¹¹⁰ but at the same time that “The whole conceit of the picture is spun in willful disregard of the laws governing time, space and sound.”¹¹¹ With statements like these, the film should promise the use of some, if not all, of the techniques described in this thesis. In order to mimic an early film esthetically, *The Artist* is presented in the 1.33:1 aspect ratio, is in black and white, and uses intertitles as means of dialogue and narrative descriptions.

¹⁰⁹ Ty Burr, 'The Artist' [Online Review]. Published 23 December 2011, *The Boston Globe*. [Accessed 26 March 2017, offline copy in author's possession. URL in Biblio.].

¹¹⁰ Anthony Lane, 'Better Times— "The Artist" and "The Descendants"' [Online Review]. Published 21 November 2011, *The New Yorker*. [Accessed 26 March 2017, offline copy in author's possession. URL in Biblio.].

¹¹¹ A.O. Scott, 'Sparkling, Swooning and Suffering Wordlessly— "The Artist," by Michel Hazanavicius' [Online Review]. Published 24 November 2011, *The New York Times*. [Accessed 26 March 2017, offline copy in author's possession. URL in Biblio.].

Furthermore, Hazanavicius stated, when discussing directing the actors, that by shooting *The Artist* at “twenty-two frames per second...the higher speed would give their actions the flavor of the Twenties.”¹¹² A revelatory statement meaning that he intended the film to be projected at a higher rate, i.e., 24 fps. Does it produce a flavor that oozes of the Jazz Age? Twenty-two fps throughout the film indicates a constant frame rate, i.e., no dynamic shooting. Without the variable rate, action is not sped up as in *Ask Father*, for example. By shooting at a constant rate, all that is accomplished is a slight acceleration of *everything*, dramatic and comedic scenes alike. Being so close to 24 fps, however, makes this imperceptible. It may well sound satisfactory in an interview but, as is apparent, no determined speed, either camera or projector, can be identified.

Thus, no dynamic shooting or speed manipulation is found in *The Artist*. What is found is sound, and quite a lot of it. Five minutes in, the film uses hearing to justify a cut.¹¹³ Our main character—the film star George Valentin, played by Jean Dujardin—is attending the premiere of his latest movie. Together with his producer and crew, he nervously awaits “The End” and the audience’s reaction. Instead of showing us the applauding crowd and then the relieved Valentin, the film shows the reaction shot first. Valentin’s listening and subsequent smile allow the film to cut to the audience applauding; the proper reaction shot, as it were (Figure 6.1). Recalling Michel Chion’s *phantom sound*, this scene makes use of it. The reaction shot of Valentin suggests a sound, i.e., the acclaim, we can never hear. However, this scene would, of course, work equally well in a synchronized sound film.



Figure 6.1 Valentin’s reaction tells us about the applauding in *The Artist*

¹¹² Rebecca M. Alvin, 'The Silent Treatment—An Interview with Michel Hazanavicius', *Cineaste*, 37/2 (2012), p. 9.

¹¹³ *The Artist* (La Petite Reine, Studio 37, La Classe Américaine, et. al.; France, USA, Belgium; 2011), Dir: Michel Hazanavicius; Photog.: Guillaume Schiffman. The scene starts at ~00:05:25.

A Mimodiegetic part appears roughly half an hour into the film.¹¹⁴ Valentin is sitting in his tiring-room after a sound film demonstration. When he puts down a glass of liquor, a *clink* is heard. Not only on the extradiegetic soundtrack, but also by Valentin, who notices what should be a familiar, intradiegetic sound to him but non-existent to us. Instead, his hearing is transported to our side of the screen. The intradiegetic world is supposed to be Valentin's silent world. Suddenly sound is introduced, a sound that normally always exists but is inaudible. Now, he reacts as if it should not exist. Trying to find a limit, Valentin topples items on the counter, and they too make a sound. When he tries to talk and shout, however, no syllable is audible. He stands up in horror, knocks over the chair and upsets the dog, all of which make a noise. As a parenthesis, the dog continues its barking outside the frame, as opposed to the dog in *Girl Shy*. Then Valentin's telephone begins to ring. He runs outside and encounters laughing girls and, as the grand finale, a feather landing on the ground with a thunderous noise.

This is all a dream of Valentin's. Nevertheless, its inclusion is a prime example of mimodiegetic sound, and, in fact, how it successfully penetrates into the intradiegetic world. Since it is a dream, Hazanavicius and crew evade all rules entirely. There is no conformity; every sound is chosen, rather than inevitably existing, i.e. in a full-blown synchronized sound film. Valentin's dog is allowed to bark, but he himself is not. When he runs outside, only his footsteps and the girls are heard, not what *an outside* usually consists of. Defining what kind of sequence this is in terms of *silent*, *hybrid* and *sound* is difficult. Clearly, the film is supposed to imitate an early film, yet it introduces intradiegetic sound that is synchronized and audible to everyone, including the characters. It is not, therefore, a hybrid such as *Don Juan*, for instance, since the synchronized sound effects are only heard by us in the audience. No other verdict can be made but to say that the sequence is a synchronized sound film within an early film imitation. The possibilities are no doubt great when the early film conventions are meddled with at this level. If nothing else, the film escapes confusing us by only allowing the intradiegetic sound solely to interject itself in a dream sequence. Unless, of course, we disregard the film's ending, but more on that in a moment.

Toward the end of the film, Valentin is bankrupt. His final film—still with no synchronized sound, in defiance of the current “fad”—coincides not only with his nemesis' new, synchronized sound film, but also with the market crash of 1929. Valentin ends up in a dilapidated apartment with a gun in his hand. The nemesis—Peppy Miller, played by Bérénice

¹¹⁴ Ibid. At ~00:30:30.

Bejo, a film star comfortable with the talkies who has risen through the ranks while Valentin has declined—is only a nemesis *métier*. She sympathizes with Valentin’s situation and is driving over to see him. Meanwhile, Valentin holds his gun to his mouth. An intertitle interrupts—“BANG!”—and for a moment we fear the worst. Relief supervenes as the film cuts to Miller’s car, wrecked against a tree outside the apartment building (Figure 6.2).¹¹⁵ This example shows how the lack of audible sound can misdirect in a successful way. A synchronized sound film would have to show Valentin reacting to the crash, rather than deceive us with his apparent suicide.



Figure 6.2 Misdirection by an intertitle in *The Artist*

Miller runs up to Valentin and they reconcile. Intent on helping him, she suggests they star in a musical film, and the producer is beside himself after their trial dance in his office. Ergo, *The Artist* ends with Valentin and Miller filming a dance number. Reaching their final steps, the assistant director yells, for everyone to hear, including us: “Cut!” If that is for the in-film crew to cut, or *The Artist* to stop being an early film-imitation, is debatable. The producer exclaims “Perfect! Beautiful! Could you give me just one more?” And to this Valentin replies, with a heavy accent, “With pleasure.”¹¹⁶ What began as an tribute to the early era ends as a fully synchronized sound film.

6.3 *Juha* (1999) and *La Antena* (2007)

In contrast to *The Artist*, the Finnish film *Juha* (1999), directed by Aki Kaurismäki, is presented in the 1.85:1 aspect ratio, but is monochrome and uses intertitles. It retains the synchronized sound film’s 24 frames per second—25 fps on DVD—and is void of any dynamic shooting. A mimodiegetic, and to my thesis serendipitous, homage to the sole violinist in *Sången om den*

¹¹⁵ Ibid. At ~01:32:05.

¹¹⁶ Ibid. At ~01:36:15.

eldröda blomman manifests itself in a band orchestra at a dance pavilion. The soundtrack begins before the characters enter the dance hall and is, at first, extradiegetic. Soon after they enter the pavilion, the camera is pushed in on the orchestra. Via a cut to the main characters as they begin to dance, the film cuts back to the players, whose playing joins the extradiegetic soundtrack and becomes fully mimodiegetic.¹¹⁷

A foundation is laid, depicting how the film will, and already has, handled mimodiegetic sound. In important scenes, sound effects imitate and emphasize the visual importance, whether it might be a repaired car taking off, the honing of an ax head, or gunshots echoing throughout a room. At a bar later in the film, another coincidental homage appears in the form of a singer. We are back in 1927 and the only difference is the replacement of Al Jolson with a nightingale singing a French ballad. The bar patrons' chatter remains, as it does in the *Jazz Singer*, mute to us.¹¹⁸ *Juha* settles for the occasional sound effect and strays no further into the speculative film language that I, in this thesis, try to unfold. Imitating an early film in the way *Juha* does is not enough to distinguish explicit cinematic vocabulary, and thus the film should not hold the banner for the contemporary early era films.

La Antena (2007) offers a more stylish approach to the early era than both *Juha* and *The Artist*. Though no speed variations are found, the film takes refreshing liberties with the medium. Notably, the story is set in a fictional city—*Ciudad sin voz* [*City Without a Voice*—where the residents long since have lost their voices. With a creative use of the titles, the filmmakers embellish the muted characters further. They avoid breaking the visual image with intertitles and replace them with a form of “living subtitles” that the characters interact with at times. These subtitles take different forms and are seen from other angles when the camera cuts to another shot. In one scene at the beginning, for instance, a father is consoling his daughter after an accident. The camera points straight at the man as he says “No fue tu CULPA” [‘It wasn’t your FAULT,’ capital letters as per the film.] Cutting to the reaction shot of the girl, only the word “CULPA” is seen, and its meaning changes from *fault* to *guilt*. She proceeds to look up at the word—the subtitles are liberated from the bottom of the frame—and is thus

¹¹⁷ *Juha* (Sputnik Oy, Oy Yleisradio Ab TV1, Pandora Cinema; Finland, France; 1999), Dir: Aki Kaurismäki; Photog.: Timo Salminen. The scene starts at ~00:02:40.

¹¹⁸ *Ibid.* The scene starts at ~00:48:00.

reacting to, or choosing only to see, *the single word* instead of the father's assurance (Figure 6.3).¹¹⁹



Figure 6.3 Subtitles enters the diegetic world in *La Antena*

Since the characters are mute, the titles literally become a part of the diegetic world and the words are silently articulated; this means that there exists no intradiegetic speech. In fact, lip-reading is well developed in the *City Without a Voice*. Nevertheless, we in the audience, familiar with the early era films, see no difference at first. Even though the characters explicitly are presented as mute, this does not change how we interpret them. What the director Esteban Sapir manages to do, however, is to change how we perceive the familiar muteness. Since the denizens rely on lip-reading, two mouths must be present to enable a dialogue. No one's attention can be brought about without some type of contraption. A cowbell is widely used in the film, for example. As a result, Sapir can interject an underlying meaning, and thus open up his film to a wider interpretation than *The Artist* with its contrivance does.¹²⁰ Sapir gives himself opportunities when he adapts the early era and incorporates modern techniques to aid his storytelling.

Between the visual references to film history that *La Antena* provides—from *Le Voyage dans la Lune* (1902) to *Metropolis* (1927)—another *Jazz Singer*-scene flickers past the

¹¹⁹ *La Antena* (LadobleA; Argentina; 2007), Dir: Esteban Sapir; Photog.: Christian Cottet. The scene appears at ~00:05:15.

¹²⁰ If one is searching for a thorough interpretation of *La Antena*, a chapter in Yvonne Frances Cornejo's 'The Embodiment of Trauma in Science Fiction Film: A Case Study of Argentina,' Doctoral Thesis (University of Leicester, 2014) provides a tantalizing read. Her thesis is unrelated to my purpose here and is thus solely a footnote. Additionally, Michel Chion briefly analyzes the film's titles in his book *Words on Screen* [Écrit au cinéma], trans. Claudia Gorbman (New York: Columbia University Press, 2017). Lastly, Melinda Blos-Jáni discusses the film in her book chapter 'Is Silece Hereditary?...', found in *Words and Images on the Screen: Language, Literature and Moving Pictures*, ed. Agnes Petho (Newcastle upon Tyne: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2008).

audience's eyes. Initially, the extradiegetic soundtrack plays a song that the visual image soon links to a record player located in the bar. By cutting to a stage performer seemingly singing the song, the sound has become intradiegetic, and when the record momentarily gets stuck, so does the singer.¹²¹ *La Antena* is a mixture of genres, including noir, subpar science fiction and a thriller with an absurd villain. Case in point: The villain, Mr. TV, is stealing *the word* from the already voiceless residents. His henchman, an inventor with a TV set in front of his mouth so to enlarge it for easy lip-reading, describes to Mr. TV the only reason their plot can fail—which, naturally, the protagonist overhears. Or, rather, *sees*, as he observes the titles through a spyglass. Mr. TV reaffirms to the inventor that his plan will follow through, and, with a punch, he literally sends his words out of the frame. What he has mouthed for the inventor—and us—to read, he physically banishes from the diegetic world. He is made ruler of his mouthed words and the hearing and comprehension of his fellow characters.

La Antena opens with the title, “Pasaron muchísimos años y a nadie parecía preocuparle el silencio.” Translated it says, “Many, many years went by and nobody seemed bothered by the silence,”¹²² and while the director may have alluded to something different, one can read it as a statement regarding the infancy of the film medium. Reality, then, had its voice stripped when it first appeared on film. In *La Antena*, voices are seen, sounds are read. Diegesis, meanwhile, is confused.

6.4 *Dr. Plonk* (2007)

With an idea sprung from the discovery of old film stock,¹²³ Rolf de Heer, the director of *Dr. Plonk* (2007), re-creates an early film with a hand-cranked camera. Presented in black and white and in the Academy Ratio of 1.37:1, *Dr. Plonk* is a technically distinct modern early film. Set in 1907, the titular Dr. Plonk calculates that the world will end in 2008. Nobody cares and Parliament asks him for physical proof. Desperate to find proof, Plonk builds a time machine so he can travel to the future. Complications ensue, as his assistant Paulus is both deaf and dumb. Moreover, his dog does its best to disrupt the concentration of Paulus further.

¹²¹ *La Antena* (2007). The scene starts at ~00:29:25.

¹²² As per the English subtitles.

¹²³ indieeye, 'Rolf De heer - Dr Plonk Interview' [Web Video]. Published 23 June 2008, *Youtube*. [Accessed 11 April 2017, offline copy in author's possession. URL in Biblio.]. On the question whether *Dr. Plonk* is a silent movie as a different language, ~00:00:17.

De Heer takes advantage of the hand-cranked camera and shoots the film at a lower rate in knowledge of the higher projection speed. He does not confide himself to one speed, however, but chooses when to decrease the frame rate to enhance the action. When Paulus fails to hear the security device—a doorbell—linking the time machine to the control center, Dr. Plonk chases him through the lab, up a small stair landing, through the house and back to the lab. The camera only shows the lab and cuts when both are outside the frame, producing the visual “Freleng Door” effect.¹²⁴ Plonk ends the chase when he jumps from the landing onto Paulus and they both fall to the floor.¹²⁵ In projected speed, the chase is energized. At camera speed, 18 fps, the pace slackens and the floor fall has a different gravity to it, as it should.

When Dr. Plonk finally gets the machine with its security device up and running, he begins exploring the future. He adjusts the controls accordingly to arrive at different places each journey. His first stop is a train track, a place shown earlier in this thesis as a prominent location for gags. Plonk sets up his camera to gather evidence when he turns around and reacts to something. The film cuts to show a train moving toward him (Figure 6.4). No volodiegetic surprise for the audience, nor a suspenseful moment where we know of the train but Plonk does not. A missed opportunity to take advantage of suppressed hearing.¹²⁶



Figure 6.4 No volodiegetic surprise in Dr. Plonk

The “Freleng Door” gag reappears later in the film. Instead of a domestic chase, it now features two cops—surely descendants of Keystone—and Dr. Plonk running between vehicles in a car manufacturing garage. This is another scene in which variable frame rates are utilized. Initially,

¹²⁴ After Friz Freleng, animator and director at Warner Bros. Also known as the “Scooby-Doo Doors” trope, but has its origin long before the birth of film.

¹²⁵ *Dr. Plonk* (Australian Film Finance Corporation, Vertigo Productions Pty. Ltd.; Australia; 2007), Dir: Rolf de Heer; Photog.: Judd Overton. The scene starts at ~00:24:03.

¹²⁶ *Ibid.* The scene starts at ~00:37:03.

the chase runs at 18 fps and has Plonk run toward the camera with cars flanking him and the police in pursuit. Plonk turns left when he reaches the camera and the cops follow, but not before one of them runs into the other and does a somersault. Next follows the “Freleng” gag, still at 18 fps, which ends when one of the officers stops in confusion. As he searches for his quarry, Plonk runs past him and the other officer tumbles into his colleague.¹²⁷

Analyzed at 14 fps, the tumble reveals the choreography of the scene. The first officer runs into the middle of the frame and stops. He leans forward, hands on knees and starts searching. At the precise moment when Plonk runs past him, the officer shifts his weight to prepare for the tackle from the second officer, who proceeds to tumble over the back of the first officer and lands on concrete. Projected at 24 or 25 fps, this is indiscernible. A remnant from the brawl in *Easy Street*. With the frame rate variation, de Heer utilizes one of the more common tools used in the early era to disguise choreography and energize action.

6.5 *Blancanieves* (2012) and *Silent Movie* (1976)

Blancanieves (2012) is a Spanish re-imagination of *Snow White* set in a bullfighting-crazed Seville during the 1920s. Carmen grows up with her grandmother in a little house in Seville. Her mother has died in childbirth, and, after a career ending accident as a bullfighter, the father becomes estranged and marries the nurse caring for him. They live in a reclusive estate owned by the father but run by the increasingly evil stepmother. When Carmen’s grandmother dies, she is sent to the estate and reunited with her chairbound father. Not for long, however; the stepmother’s greed grows strong and drives her to murder Carmen’s father. With the father out of the way, the stepmother is free to live a life in affluence. Having grown up, Carmen is suddenly a threat and is victim to an attempt on her life. Assumed dead, the ultimately failed assassin leaves Carmen who is subsequently found by a group of bullfighting dwarfs, traveling and performing around the country. She joins their show and quickly becomes the star, much to one of the dwarf’s chagrin. Their tour takes them to Seville and, in an advert, the stepmother recognizes her long-lost stepdaughter. At the bullring, Carmen assumes her father’s *montera* as she bullfights where her father once did. In attendance is the stepmother, and she has brought a poisoned apple.

Presented in 1.37:1, in monochrome tones and with intertitles, it has all the superficial layer of an early film. It is shot and presented at 24 fps, and thus contains no dynamic shooting,

¹²⁷ Ibid. At ~00:41:20.

nor does it incorporate a suppressed sound or a volodiegetic element. In fact, *Blancanieves*' relevance to this thesis appears in a few sporadic uses of mimodiegetic sound. The first instance is at dinner. Having finished the soup, the stepmother rings the dinner bell and the entrée enters. As the bell tinkles, the soundtrack mimics the ringing.¹²⁸ Instance number two occurs when Carmen and the dwarfs have just eaten and are outside dancing by the campfire. One of the dwarfs plays an accordion and the soundtrack imitates it.¹²⁹ However, it refrains from mimicking the accompanying tambourine. Perhaps an accordion is easier to imitate without the visuals betraying the extradiegetic sound, i.e., it is harder for the audience to discover any faulty, instrumental movement. Nevertheless, these examples offer the audience an aural link to the visual imagery. In all other respects, *Blancanieves* forgoes the advantages and tools early era filmmaking offers.

Mel Brooks' *Silent Movie* (1976) concludes this chapter. Being a parody, its inclusion here is moot. Regardless, it does fuse a synchronized sound film *sans sound* with early filmmaking. Whether it is done in a serious or a parodic manner, however, contributes to the mootness. Shot and projected at 24 fps, it presents, in color and 1.85:1 widescreen, Funn, Eggs and Bell in their quest to secure stars to act in Funn's next directorial project for Big Picture Studios. Not only does *Silent Movie* contain mimodiegetic parts, but Brooks also manipulates the speed and inserts a singular spoken word, i.e., for a second, the film becomes a hybrid. Since *Silent Movie* is shot at 24 fps for projection at 24, the speed-up is conspicuous and fails to hide itself, in contrast to the examples in chapter five. This is prominent in two scenes, one where they find James Caan boxing, and another where they race Paul Newman on electric wheelchairs.

Funn approaches James Caan outside the latter's trailer, where Caan exercises a punching bag. Intrigued, Caan invites them inside his trailer. He turns and flings his arm to lead the way, but manages to knock Eggs over. Turning to Funn, he hits him and, turning again, he hits Bell.¹³⁰ Brooks uses the material shot at 24 fps and interprets it as 12 fps, rather than shooting at 12 from the outset. Thus, he gets the distinguished, excessive speed synchronized sound films do when converting 24 fps to e.g. 12 fps, in lieu of projecting 12 fps at 24 fps. The wheelchair

¹²⁸ *Blancanieves* (Arcadia Motion Pictures, Nix Films, Sisifo Films AIE, The Kraken Films, et. al.; Spain,

Belgium, France; 2012), Dir: Pablo Berger; Photog.: Kiko de la Rica. The sound appears at ~00:46:18.

¹²⁹ Ibid. The scene starts at ~01:10:13.

¹³⁰ *Silent Movie* (Crossbow Productions; USA; 1976), Dir: Mel Brooks; Photog.: Paul Lohmann. The scene starts at ~00:20:30.

chase employs the same technique, but alters the conversion based on the shot. When Newman, Funn and Eggs zoom up a ramp, the conversion is set at 10 fps. At level ground in the next shot, the rate is at 12 fps.¹³¹

With regard to the mimodiegetic level, Brooks enhances the soundtrack similarly to *Blancanieves*. When the gang of three are approaching Burt Reynolds for a role, they are rejected at the door. Bell suggests they knock again so he can “get a foot in the door.” Naturally, the door crushes his foot and to emphasize this, a crunching noise is added.¹³² Portrayed in the film as Funn’s antagonist is the board of Engulf & Devour, a conglomerate eager to buy Big Picture Studios. Engulf, played by Harold Gould, is enraged when his subordinates inform him that the studio has declined his offer. Hearing that Funn is trying to save the studio with his film, Engulf, now frothing at the mouth, turns rabid when he hears that Burt Reynolds and James Caan have agreed to do the movie. The moment he starts frothing, an increasingly angry dog is heard on the soundtrack. At his peak, Engulf furiously climbs over the table and bites a board member, all to the sound of a dog barking and growling.¹³³ Meanwhile, Funn, Eggs and Bell are trying to convince Liza Minnelli to star in the film. Disguised as three knights in full armor, they enter the studio canteen and join her table. Or, rather, try to join her. Chairs, tables and other diners succumb to the inept trio’s temporary movement handicap in the suits of armor. Sounds of armor moving, crashing into objects, and tables upending emphasize the mayhem on the soundtrack.¹³⁴

Mel Brooks incorporates the mime Marcel Marceau in the plot, only to have him utter the single word spoken in the entire film. Funn is calling the celebrated Frenchman to offer him a part in the movie. Miming his way to the phone, Marceau picks up the receiver and listens. Answering with a simple “non” the parody is complete.¹³⁵ With Marceau, Brooks breaks the barrier between early film and synchronized sound film. He disregards the lenient rules of diegesis for the sake of a joke.

¹³¹ Ibid. At ~00:55:28.

¹³² Ibid. At ~00:15:26.

¹³³ Ibid. At ~00:26:45.

¹³⁴ Ibid. At ~00:33:28.

¹³⁵ Ibid. At ~00:51:55.

7. Epilogue

7.1 Foundations

I embarked on this journey with three signposts pointing in three directions. Ben Model asked what the variable frame rate accomplished; Kevin Brownlow inquired about the correct projection speed; and Michel Chion described layers of reality and sound. Purposefully, I wondered if not these paths all led to the same place, namely an early film language detached from the talkies and later developments. Model claimed that the early era invented its own reality, lacking synchronized sound and color but filled with gravity alterations and impossible feats demanding careful staging. This, he writes, is “what silent cinema and the people who made it lost when talking pictures took over.”¹³⁶ Kevin Brownlow researched what speed a projection should have, and the importance of a capable projectionist. His research findings made me ask what the projection of today is capable of, since showing an early film at the incorrect speed “shows no respect towards the films of the past. It does them a grave disservice.”¹³⁷ Thus, I set out to find the current methods of presenting them.

In order to discover an early film language, I used Michel Chion’s tool in the “phantom sound,” together with my own devices in the diegetic scrutiny. With these tools and theories, I set out to redraw the map, as it were. Instead of having the separate theories go separate ways, my hope was to join them. Besides analyzing early films in search for the language, I decided to apply any findings on contemporary films. By doing this, I anticipated these films to use the early film language and ultimately confirm its existence.

7.2 Findings

My intention and aims were to determine if an alternate reality existed, wherein a *lingua franca* of filmmaking substantialized the alternate realm of reality. Moreover, with the techniques found in silent comedy I analyzed six contemporary films, searching for traces of this tentative language. The techniques found in comedy are not exclusive to comedy but by using comedies,

¹³⁶ Ben Model, "'Undercranking': The Magic Behind the Slapstick", p. 26.

¹³⁷ Kevin Brownlow, 'Silent Films: What Was the Right Speed?', p. 167.

the plethora of short subjects allowed for a sizeable sample to be perused within the time allotted.¹³⁸ With such a corpus of films, finding a film vocabulary became easier.

Together with the discussion about projection, the three aspects were intended to amalgamate and thus present a thorough perusal. I further endeavored to repudiate Leonard Maltin's claim that "If comedy were a science, it could be explained and defined much more easily. But it is not a science, and the gag is not a mathematical formula." What Maltin says is that comedy is not a science, and therefore difficult to explain. He says that a gag is not a mathematical formula. If it would be, however, such a formula would explain and make comedy easier to grasp. My findings argue against Maltin's phrase.

However, although a formulaic procedure may exist, that does, by no means, make the subject easier. It clarifies the matter, but instead of peeling off layers and revealing the core, it *discloses* layers. Not necessarily new layers, but layers consigned to oblivion. Usage of suppressed sound or hearing is prominent in *One Week*, together with a volodiegetic level. Keaton and his wife intentionally suppress their hearing, while the film neglects to insert another shot of the steam whistle. Conjointly, this sudden lack of hearing and temporary deafness by editing provides a splendid example. I failed, however, to discover this in the contemporary films analyzed. *Dr. Plonk* came close. Otherwise, the practice is conspicuous by its absence. Returning to the sources, *Ask Father* utilized suppressed sound to decide when a dog was allowed to bark. Furthermore, attempts, albeit ultimately failed ones, are seen in *Nothing Doing* and *Fiddlesticks*. Charley Bowers breaks through a brick wall in the former, while Harry Langdon's double bass in the latter fails to record in the other player's ears. Bowers fails because the time for him to regain his footing misdirects the intention. Instead of bursting through the wall and knock all the thugs out, he falls to the floor and must pick himself up before anyone can react. If they had reacted instantly, Bowers would have been overpowered. Langdon suggests the vase and barrel replacing the coins thrown to be the gag, rather than his horrendous play. These examples reveal a science and process behind the camera, but does not render comedy easier to define. We can demonstrate the process but we have more to explain. Either way, I cannot entirely repudiate Maltin because his theory is unclear.

Indisputable is the fact that a variable frame rate existed during the early era. Every film deconstructed was shot with a speed differing from the projected speed. *Neighbors* and *Ask*

¹³⁸ See Appendix C for a complete list of films approached for this thesis. Note that the early film language pursued may be found in the unutilized films listed in the Appendix. Their exclusion does not equal ineligibility, but rather due to a paginal restriction.

Father, for instance, interchanged frame rates within scenes. *Easy Street* took advantage of a slower shooting speed to choreograph a brawl. A slower rate is achieved by, and today known as, undercranking. However, undercranking has its base at 24 fps. One either under- or overcranks from the position of 24. As such, the practice of “undercranking” first became “undercranking” when the talkies ousted the flexible film production methods. Variable frame rates during the early era were, simply, praxis. It was *filmmaking*, not a filmmaking-technique, per se. The projection speed determined what was—and became—undercranking. Nevertheless, describing the variability today as under- and overcranking is, of course, perfectly fine. Mel Brooks utilized undercranking in post-production to achieve the described effects in *Silent Movie*. Rolf de Heer undercranked *Dr. Plonk* on location and achieved a similar effect, yet technically in line with early film methods.

D.W. Griffith, however, asked for a change in projection speed to have *Home, Sweet Home* properly presented. Among the modern films, none except *The Artist* and *Dr. Plonk* manipulated the frame rates according to the tentative film language of yesteryear. The former shot the entire film at a lower, constant rate, while the latter changed rates depending on the scene. This, I argue, propels *Dr. Plonk* furthest down the rabbit hole of early era-imitations.

Dr. Plonk is the only film on the roster that uses early era-*techniques* beside the visual similes. *La Antena* deviates from the *imitative* route and concocts a mixture of genres, techniques and esthetical choices to produce an *imaginative* imitation. *The Artist* experiments with a mimodiegetic part but this is, as noted, not a diegetic level exclusive to the early era. Live orchestras and accompanists initiated the practice, but nothing today except the soundtrack could replicate mimodiegetic sound in synchronized sound films or home media releases. Unless the film is projected with an accompanying orchestra, that is. It is ultimately inadequate to apply a monochrome filter and interject the film with intertitles to call it an early era film. By my reasoning in this thesis, describing a film as “silent” because it is monochrome and contains intertitles is not enough. Dynamic shooting and intentional sonic suppression need to be accounted for, as they were tools utilized during the early era.

I hesitate to label the early era as a reality separated from another reality. Film techniques learned and perfected during the first thirty-odd years are still in use today. The layers of Michel Chion are present and interplay on different levels. *La Antena* and *Dr. Plonk* exemplify this. A silent film can exist in both worlds, with dynamic frame rates and sound from either the soundtrack or aural recollections elicited by visual imagery. Furthermore, an audience not only brings knowledge to connect the images, but also experiences of noise and weight.

7.3 Further Research

Notwithstanding the findings, a discrepancy between belief and reality unfolds. Fictional film asks us in various degrees to suspend or suppress our disbelief. Sound and silence, speed and gravity are only a model of reality and not reality itself. Thus, we construct reality from the images projected. Hence, the statement “the map is not the territory” applies. Belief—the map—is not the same as reality—the territory. A possible theoretical framework on which to build a study on early film and reality, perhaps. The omnipresent Marshall McLuhan should be a natural point of departure.¹³⁹

Continuing on the philosophical possibilities, a correlation between phenomenology and how time and gravity are altered can extend the readings of early film. Phenomenological thinkers ponder on and apply a philosophical view on creating experience—the science of reality. Edmund Husserl, for instance, paints a vivid picture of a comet, where *now* is the comet nucleus and the tail constitutes *retention*—a moment after the now, where it is still with us. In addition, the *protention* is the immediate future, and is something to be expected.¹⁴⁰ Thus, we can tie our expectation of gravity in early film to our knowledge of gravity, and observe how the protention and retention are displaced.¹⁴¹ Lastly, in part of the thesis, I discussed *seeing* the sound, i.e., an image of a steam whistle invokes the sound of a steam whistle. Synesthesia in early film may provide insights of imagery and its influences on other senses. From a film historic or a broader academic film perspective, *La Antena* and its use of titles serves as a fine introduction to studies on intertitles, and the relation between the visual and written language.

Numerous films—especially feature films—are conspicuous by their absence in this thesis. A closer study of these will either confirm or dispute my findings. Furthermore, the early era material I used was strictly American. If an early film language exists, films from other national cinemas should also indicate this. Additionally, the animation genre is an enticing part of film history barely touched upon here. Ben Model mentions the possibilities to find traces of

¹³⁹ McLuhan’s *The Medium is the Massage: An Inventory of Effects* (New York: Bantam Books, 1967) and *Understanding Media* (London: Routledge, 1964) in particular.

¹⁴⁰ Edmund Husserl, *Collected Works. Vol. 4, On the Phenomenology of the Consciousness of Internal Time (1893-1917)* [Zur Phänomenologie des inneren Zeitbewusstseins], ed. Rudolf Bernet, trans. John B. Brough (The Hague: Nijhoff, 1991), p. 32.

¹⁴¹ See Edmund Husserl’s work on retention and protention, and Maurice Merleau-Ponty’s further use and development. For a study on Buster Keaton and phenomenology, see Noël E. Carroll’s *Comedy Incarnate: Buster Keaton, Physical Humor, and Bodily Coping* (Malden, MA: Blackwell Pub., 2007).

early films in animation, and *Hook, Line and Stinker* does take advantage of the suppressed hearing and the volodiegetic part of diegesis.

Venturing outside the academic world, a practical appliance of the early film language is possible. With the proper equipment, one can replicate the methods of yesteryear. Rolf de Heer did just that with *Dr. Plonk*, albeit forgoing using the volodiegetic level and hearing as tools to create situations. If one is so inclined, the assumedly now-defunct movement in Neo-Silent film, co-founded by the cameraman L. Sprague Anderson, has a manifesto to adhere to. Not nearly as strict as Dogme 95's "Vow of Chastity," but with an intention to "explore the art form with an understanding of the past that unlocks a new form of expression." Interweaving the "35mm hand-cranked equipment and techniques of the non-synchronous sound era in both the production and exhibition of film,"¹⁴² together with modern equipment, the Neo-Silent film movement might just be the resurgence early film needs.

¹⁴² L. Sprague Anderson et al., 'Artist's Manifesto' [Web Page]. Published 5 Sept 2010, *silentmovies*. [Accessed 20 April 2017, offline copy in author's possession. URL in Biblio.].

8. Appendices

Appendix A: The Climax in *One Week*

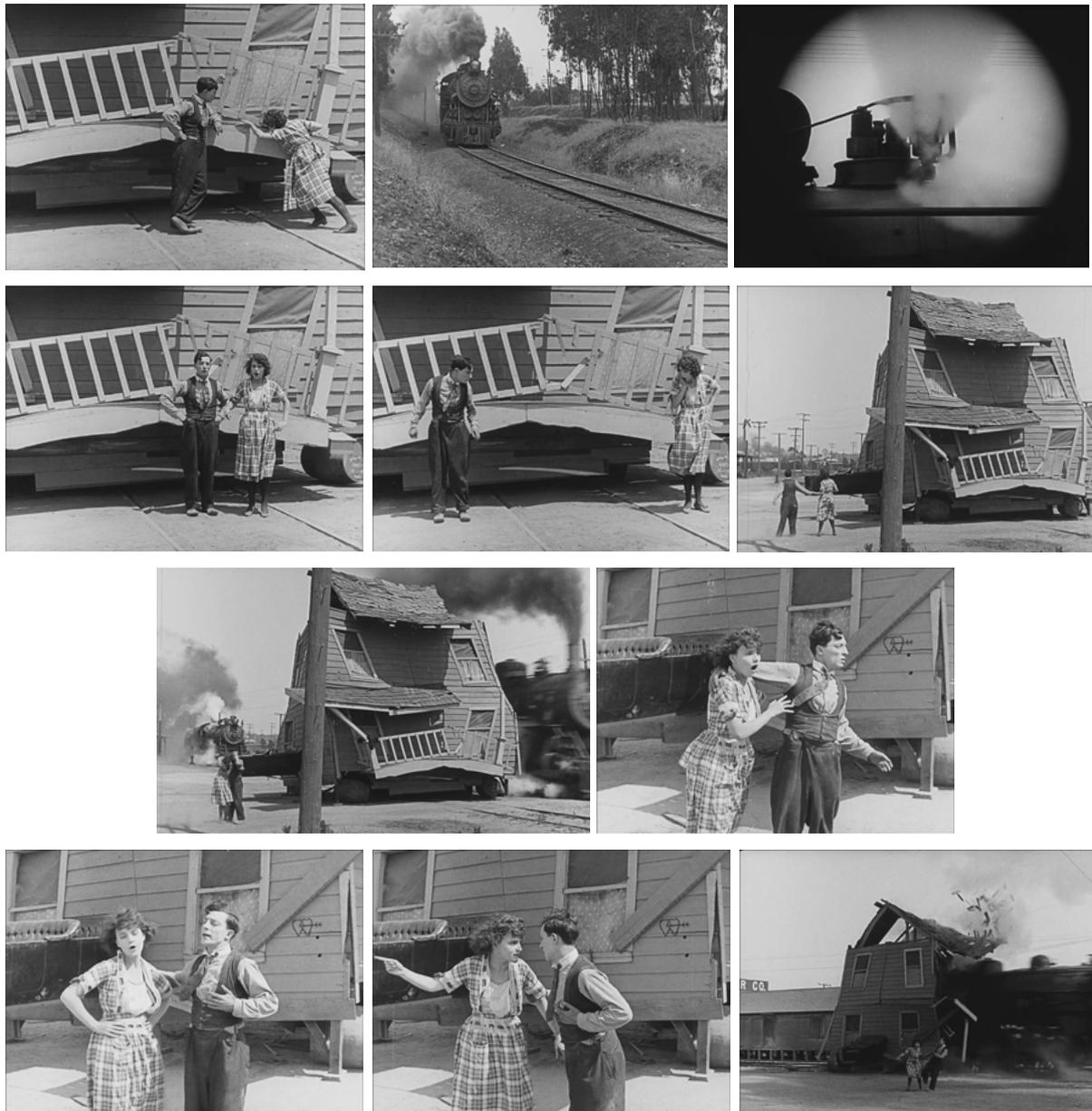


Figure 8.1 *The Climax in One Week, moment by moment*

Chronological moments from the climax in *One Week*. Each frame follows in order and represents parts of a shot. No cut is omitted. Notice the insert of the steam whistle and its absence when the second train arrives. Its inclusion warns the characters and tells the audience a train is imminent. As the warning fails to appear later, we can assume the characters are suppressing their hearing in order to surprise us. Likewise is the choice of neglecting a close-up of a second whistle—the editing refrains from giving the audience information and the second train remains a surprise.

Appendix B: Etymological Foundations

Greek ¹⁴³	μετά (meta)	μῖμος (mimos)	ὑπό (hypo)
	Between, among	Imitator, mime	Under, beneath
Latin ¹⁴⁴	extrā	intrā	uolō (volo)
	Outside, externally	Inside, within	To fly, move rapidly

Appendix C: A List of Films Watched as Part of This Thesis, sorted in Chronological Order

<i>Home, Sweet Home</i> (1914)	<i>Whirl o' the West</i> (1921)	<i>Don't Tell Everything</i> (1927)
<i>The Champion</i> (1915)	<i>Cops</i> (1922)	<i>Fiddlesticks</i> (1927)
<i>The Mystery of the Leaping Fish</i> (1916)	<i>Day Dreams</i> (1922)	<i>Many a Slip</i> (1927)
<i>The Rink</i> (1916)	<i>Dr. Jack</i> (1922)	<i>Nothing Doing</i> (1927)
<i>Easy Street</i> (1917)	<i>The Electric House</i> (1922)	<i>Prudence</i> (1927)
<i>Bathing Beauties and Big Boobs</i> (1918)	<i>The Frozen North</i> (1922)	<i>The Stunt Man</i> (1927)
<i>Fireman Save My Child</i> (1918)	<i>The Sawmill</i> (1922)	<i>A Wild Roomer</i> (1927)
<i>Ask Father</i> (1919)	<i>Shiver and Shake</i> (1922)	<i>Early to Bed</i> (1928)
<i>Back Stage</i> (1919)	<i>The Balloonatic</i> (1923)	<i>Pass the Gravy</i> (1928)
<i>Don't Shove</i> (1919)	<i>Post no Bills</i> (1923)	<i>The Patsy</i> (1928)
<i>Never Touched Me</i> (1919)	<i>The First 100 Years</i> (1924)	<i>There It Is</i> (1928)
<i>Next Aisle Over</i> (1919)	<i>Girl Shy</i> (1924)	<i>Welcome Danger</i> (1929)
	<i>The Handsome Cabman</i> (1924)	
<i>Convict 13</i> (1920)	<i>Her Boy Friend</i> (1924)	<i>Parlor, Bedroom and Bath</i> (1931)
<i>An Eastern Westerner</i> (1920)	<i>Jonah Jones</i> (1924)	
<i>Get Out and Get Under</i> (1920)	<i>Smile Please</i> (1924)	<i>Hare-Way to the Stars</i> (1958)
<i>Haunted Spooks</i> (1920)	<i>Sherlock Jr.</i> (1924)	<i>Hook, Line and Stinker</i> (1958)
<i>High and Dizzy</i> (1920)	<i>The Cloudhopper</i> (1925)	
<i>Neighbors</i> (1920)	<i>The Dome Doctor</i> (1925)	<i>The Railrodder</i> (1965)
<i>One Week</i> (1920)	<i>The Freshman</i> (1925)	
<i>Number, Please?</i> (1920)	<i>His Marriage Wow</i> (1925)	<i>Silent Movie</i> (1976)
<i>School Days</i> (1920)	<i>The Movies</i> (1925)	
<i>Among Those Present</i> (1921)	<i>Seven Chances</i> (1925)	<i>Juha</i> (1999)
<i>The Bell Hop</i> (1921)	<i>Fatal Footsteps</i> (1926)	
<i>The Goat</i> (1921)	<i>For Heaven's Sake</i> (1926)	<i>Dr. Plonk</i> (2007)
<i>Hard Luck</i> (1921)	<i>Mighty Like a Moose</i> (1926)	<i>La Antena [The Aerial]</i> (2007)
<i>The Haunted House</i> (1921)	<i>Now You Tell One</i> (1926)	
<i>The 'High' Sign</i> (1921)	<i>The Strong Man</i> (1926)	<i>The Artist</i> (2011)
<i>I Do</i> (1921)	<i>Anything Once!</i> (1927)	<i>Blancanieves [Snow White]</i> (2013)
<i>The Sportsman</i> (1921)	<i>Breezing Along</i> (1927)	

¹⁴³ *A Greek-English Lexicon*, 9th suppl. edn. (Oxford: Oxford Univ. Press, 1996), s.v. 'μ ε τ á (meta), μ ἰ μ ο ς (mimos), ὑ π ό (hypo)'. pp. 1108, [1]135, [1]873.

¹⁴⁴ *Oxford Latin Dictionary* (Oxford: Clarendon P., 1968), s.v. 'extrā, intrā, uolō (volo)'. pp. 661, 953, 2099.

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Original Title: *La Antena* [*The Aerial*]

Production by: LadobleA; Argentina; 2007

Produced by: Gonzalo Agulla, José Arnal

Directed by: Esteban Sapir

Scenario: Esteban Sapir

Photographed by: Christian Cottet

Edited by: Pablo Barbieri, Carrera

Music by: Leo Sujatovich

Cast: Valeria Bertuccelli (Son of Mr TV), Alejandro Urdapilleta (Mr TV), Julieta Cardinali (Nurse), Rafael Ferro (The Inventor), Florencia Raggi (The Voice)

99 min, b/w

Edition: DVD (Dogwoof Pictures, 2008)

Original Title: *The Artist*

Production by: La Petite Reine, Studio 37, La Classe Américaine, et. al.; France, USA, Belgium; 2011

Produced by: Thomas Langmann

Directed by: Michel Hazanavicius

Scenario: Michel Hazanavicius
Photographed by: Guillaume Schiffman
Edited by: Anne-Sophie Bion, Michel Hazanavicius
Music by: Ludovic Bource
Cast: Jean Dujardin (George Valentin), Bérénice Bejo (Peppy Miller), John Goodman (Al Zimmer), James Cromwell (Clifton)
100 min, b/w
Edition: Blu-ray (Warner Bros., 2011)

Original Title: *Ask Father*
Production by: The Rolin Film Company; USA; 1919
Produced by: Hal Roach
Directed by: N/A
Scenario: H.M. Walker
Photographed by: N/A
Edited by: N/A
Music by: N/A
Cast: Harold Lloyd (The Boy), 'Snub' Pollard (The Corn-Fed Secretary), Bebe Daniels (Switchboard Operator)
13 min (DVD, Passport Video), b/w
Edition: *Smiles and Spectacles: A Harold Lloyd Treasury (1917-1947)*; DVD (Passport Video, 2007)

Original Title: *Blancanieves* [*Snow White*]
Production by: Arcadia Motion Pictures, Nix Films, Sisifo Films AIE, The Kraken Films, et. al.; Spain, Belgium, France; 2012
Produced by: Pablo Berger, Ibon Cormenzana, Jérôme Vidal
Directed by: Pablo Berger
Scenario: Pablo Berger
Photographed by: Kiko de la Rica
Edited by: Fernando Franco
Music by: Alfonso de Vilallonga
Cast: Daniel Giménez Cacho (Antonio Villalta), Ramón Barea (Don Martin), Inma Cuesta (Carmen de Triana)
104 min, b/w
Edition: Blu-ray (Cameo Media, S.L., 2013)

Original Title: *Dr. Plonk*
Production by: Australian Film Finance Corporation, Vertigo Productions Pty. Ltd.; Australia; 2007
Produced by: Rolf de Heer, Julie Ryan
Directed by: Rolf de Heer
Scenario: Rolf de Heer
Photographed by: Judd Overton
Edited by: Tania Nehme
Music by: Graham Tardif
Cast: Nigel Martin (Dr. Plonk), Paul Blackwell (Paulus), Magda Szubanski (Mrs. Plonk)
85 min, b/w
Edition: DVD (Madman Entertainment, 2012)

Original Title: *Easy Street*

Production by: Lone Star Corporation; USA; 1917

Produced by: Henry P. Caulfield, Charles Chaplin

Directed by: Charles Chaplin

Scenario: Charles Chaplin

Photographed by: William C. Foster, Roland Totheroh

Edited by: Charles Chaplin

Music by: Neil Brand (2014)

Cast: Charles Chaplin (The Derelict), Edna Purviance (The Mission Worker), Eric Campbell (The Bully)

27 min (Blu-ray, Flicker Alley), b/w

Edition: *Chaplin's Mutual Comedies 1916-1917*; Blu-ray (Flicker Alley, 2014)

Original Title: *Fiddlesticks*

Production by: Mack Sennett Comedies; USA; 1927

Produced by: Mack Sennett

Directed by: Harry Edwards

Scenario: Frank Capra, Arthur Riley

Photographed by: William Williams

Edited by: William Hornbeck

Music by: Donald Sosin (2014)

Cast: Harry Langdon (Harry Hogan), Vernon Dent (Prof. Von Tempo / Junk Dealer)

21 min (Blu-ray, The Mack Sennett Collection, Vol. One), b/w

Edition: *The Mack Sennett Collection, Vol. One*; Blu-ray (Flicker Alley, 2014)

Original Title: *Girl Shy*

Production by: The Harold Lloyd Corporation; USA; 1924

Produced by: Harold Lloyd

Directed by: Fred C. Newmeyer, Sam Taylor

Scenario: Sam Taylor, Ted Wilde & Tim Whelan

Photographed by: Walter Lundin

Edited by: Allen McNeil

Music by: Robert Israel (2002)

Cast: Harold Lloyd (The Poor Boy, Harold Meadows), Jobyna Ralston (The Rich Girl, Mary Buckingham), Richard Daniels (The Poor Man, Jerry Meadows), Carlton Griffin (The Rich Man, Ronald DeVore)

77 min (DVD, New Line Home Entertainment), b/w

Edition: *The Harold Lloyd Comedy Collection, Volume 1 (1919-1936)*; DVD, (New Line Home Entertainment, 2005)

Original Title: *The Goat*

Production by: Joseph M. Schenck Productions, Buster Keaton Productions; USA; 1921

Produced by: Joseph M. Schenck

Directed by: Buster Keaton, Malcolm St. Clair

Scenario: Buster Keaton, Malcolm St. Clair

Photographed by: Elgin Lessley

Edited by: N/A

Music by: Robert Israel (1995)

Cast: Buster Keaton (The Goat), Virginia Fox (The Police Chief's Daughter), Joe Roberts (Police Chief), Malcolm St. Clair (Dead Shot Dan)
23 min (Blu-ray, Kino Lorber), b/w
Edition: *Buster Keaton: The Short Films Collection (1920-1923)*; Blu-ray (Kino-Lorber, 2011)

Original Title: *Home, Sweet Home*
Production by: Majestic Motion Picture Company, Reliance Film Company; USA; 1914
Produced by: N/A
Directed by: D. W. Griffith
Scenario: H.E. Aitken, D.W. Griffith
Photographed by: G.W. Bitzer
Edited by: James Smith, Rose Smith
Music by: N/A
Cast: Henry B. Walthall (John Howard Payne), Josephine Crowell (Payne's Mother), Lillian Gish (Payne's Sweetheart), Dorothy Gish (Sister of Payne's Sweetheart)
55 min (Public Domain), b/w
Edition: *Public Domain*; mp4 File. < <http://archive.org/details/Home.Sweet.Home> > [Offline copy in author's possession].

Original Title: *Hook, Line and Stinker*
Production by: Warner Brothers; USA; 1958
Produced by: John W. Burton
Directed by: Chuck Jones
Scenario: Michael Maltese
Photographed by: N/A
Edited by: Treg Brown
Music by: John Seely (Stock Music Director)
Cast: N/A
6 min, color
Edition: *Looney Tunes Golden Collection: Volume 6*; DVD (Warner Home Video, 2008)

Original Title: *Juha*
Production by: Sputnik Oy, Oy Yleisradio Ab TV1, Pandora Cinema; Finland, France; 1999
Produced by: Aki Kaurismäki
Directed by: Aki Kaurismäki
Scenario: Aki Kaurismäki (based on novel by Juhani Aho)
Photographed by: Timo Salminen
Edited by: Aki Kaurismäki
Music by: Anssi Tikanmäki
Cast: Sakari Kuosmanen (Juha), Kati Outinen (Marja), André Wilms (Shemeikka)
78, b/w
Edition: DVD (Folkets Bio, 2004)

Original Title: *The Movies*
Production by: Lloyd Hamilton Corporation; USA; 1925
Produced by: Lloyd Hamilton
Directed by: Roscoe Arbuckle (as William Goodrich)
Scenario: Roscoe Arbuckle

Photographed by: Byron Houck
Edited by: N/A
Music by: Phil C. Carli (2005)
Cast: Lloyd Hamilton (A Country Boy), Marcella Daly (An Actress), Arthur Thalasso (The Villain – Bull Buckley), Frank Jonasson (The Director)
19 min (DVD, Laughsmith Entertainment), b/w
Edition: *The Forgotten Films of Roscoe “Fatty” Arbuckle*; DVD (Laughsmith Entertainment & Mackinac Media, 2005)

Original Title: *Neighbors*
Production by: Joseph M. Schenck Productions; USA; 1920
Produced by: Joseph M. Schenck
Directed by: Edward F. Cline, Buster Keaton
Scenario: Edward F. Cline, Buster Keaton
Photographed by: Elgin Lessley
Edited by: N/A
Music by: Robert Israel (2011)
Cast: Buster Keaton (The Boy), Virginia Fox (The Girl), Joe Roberts (Her Father), Joe Keaton (His Father)
18 min (Blu-ray, Kino Lorber), b/w
Edition: *Buster Keaton: The Short Films Collection (1920-1923)*; Blu-ray (Kino Lorber, 2011)

Original Title: *Nothing Doing*
Production by: Bowers Comedy Corporation; USA; 1927
Produced by: Charles R. Bowers
Directed by: Charles R. Bowers, Harold L. Muller
Scenario: N/A
Photographed by: N/A
Edited by: N/A
Music by: N/A
Cast: Charles R. Bowers (Charley)
21 min (DVD, Image Entertainment), b/w
Edition: *Charley Bowers: The Rediscovery of an American Comic Genius*; DVD (Image Entertainment, 2004)

Original Title: *One Week*
Production by: Joseph M. Schenck Productions; USA; 1920
Produced by: Joseph M. Schenck
Directed by: Edward F. Cline, Buster Keaton
Scenario: Edward F. Cline, Buster Keaton
Photographed by: Elgin Lessley
Edited by: Buster Keaton
Music by: Ben Model (2011)
Cast: Buster Keaton (The Groom), Sybil Seely (The Bride), Joe Roberts (Piano Mover), Unidentified (Handy Hank)
25 min (Blu-ray, Kino Lorber), b/w
Edition: *Buster Keaton: The Short Films Collection (1920-1923)*; Blu-ray (Kino-Lorber, 2011)

Original Title: *Parlor, Bedroom and Bath*
Production by: Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer; USA; 1931
Produced by: Buster Keaton
Directed by: Edward Sedgwick
Scenario: C.W. Bell & Mark Swan (play), Richard Schayer, Robert E. Hopkins
Photographed by: Leonard Smith
Edited by: William LeVanway
Music by: N/A
Cast: Buster Keaton (Reginald Irving), Charlotte Greenwood (Polly Hathaway), Reginald Denny (Jeffrey Haywood), Joan Peers (Nita Leslie)
73 min, color
Edition: *Buster Keaton at MGM Triple Feature*; DVD (Warner Archive Collection, 2012)

Original Title: *The Railrodder*
Production by: National Film Board of Canada; Canada; 1965
Produced by: Julian Biggs
Directed by: Gerald Potterton
Scenario: Gerald Potterton
Photographed by: Robert Humble
Edited by: Jo Kirkpatrick, Gerald Potterton
Music by: Eldon Rathburn
Cast: Buster Keaton (The Man)
25 min, color
Edition: *Public Domain*; Stream. < <http://www.nfb.ca/film/railrodder/> > [Offline copy in author's possession].

Original Title: *Seven Chances*
Production by: Buster Keaton Productions; USA; 1925
Produced by: Buster Keaton
Directed by: Buster Keaton
Scenario: Clyde Bruckman, Jean C. Havez & Joseph A. Mitchell
Photographed by: Byron Houck, Elgin Lessley
Edited by: Buster Keaton
Music by: Robert Israel (1995)
Cast: Buster Keaton (James Shannon), T. Roy Barnes (Billy Meekin), Snitz Edwards (James' Lawyer)
57 min (Blu-ray, Kino Lorber), b/w
Edition: *Seven Chances (Ultimate Edition)*; Blu-ray (Kino Lorber, 2011)

Original Title: *Sherlock Jr.*
Production by: Buster Keaton Productions; USA; 1924
Produced by: Buster Keaton, Joseph M. Schenck
Directed by: Buster Keaton
Scenario: Clyde Bruckman, Jean C. Havez & Joseph A. Mitchell
Photographed by: Byron Houck, Elgin Lessley
Edited by: Buster Keaton
Music by: The Mont Alto Motion Picture Orchestra (2010)
Cast: Buster Keaton (Projectionist / Sherlock, Jr.), Kathryn McGuire (The Girl), Joe Keaton (The Girl's Father / Man on Film Screen)

45 min (Blu-ray, Kino Lorber), b/w

Edition: *Sherlock Jr. & Three Ages (Ultimate Edition)*; Blu-ray (Kino Lorber, 2010)

Original Title: *Silent Movie*

Production by: Crossbow Productions; USA; 1976

Produced by: Michael Hertzberg

Directed by: Mel Brooks

Scenario: Mel Brooks, Ron Clark, Rudy De Luca, Barry Levinson

Photographed by: Paul Lohmann

Edited by: Stanford C. Allen, John C. Howard

Music by: John Morris

Cast: Mel Brooks (Mel Funn), Marty Feldman (Marty Eggs), Dom DeLuise (Dom Bell)

87 min (Blu-ray), color

Edition: Blu-ray (20th Century Fox Home Entertainment, 2009)