

Selecting a directorial methodology for a creative practice film

Michael Sergi

Michael Sergi was appointed Director of Film and Television at Bond University in 2008, after 13 years lecturing in film and television at the University of Canberra. After graduating from Curtin University, he was selected for the fulltime directing course at AFTRS. He spent three years learning from some of the world's best directors, including Philip Noyce, Alan Parker, Norman Jewison and Mike Liegh. Michael has directed over 100 hours of television drama in Australia and New Zealand, he has produced, written and directed many short films, documentaries, TV commercials and music videos, and has won awards for his work.

Abstract

An actor's performance, as it appears on screen, is unstable. The viewing audience has no way of knowing to what extent the performance was the actor's creation in front of the camera when the scene was filmed, or re-constructed, by the editor and director, in post-production. Editors will often describe how they took a look from this take, a sentence from that take, a reaction from yet another take, and then had the actor ADR (automated dialogue replacement) that line that had a slight word stumble in it (Seger, 1994; Rosenblum, 1979; Travis, 2002; Bare, 2000; Proferes, 2008). However, when exploring how directors read an actor's performance is the central thesis of a doctoral exegesis, as it was in my case, then it is vital that the actor's performance is captured in such a way that it remains as stable, and un-recreated, as possible. Only then can a director claim to have read the actor's performance when it was created and recognised it as being satisfactory. Otherwise, it would not be possible to know whether it was the director, the editor or the producer who truly was able to distinguish the quality of the actor's performance. In order to achieve this, I had to select a directorial methodology that would enable me to capture the actor's performance in such a way that I could begin to understand how a director reads an actor's performance on set. I would then be able to present that same unaltered performance for examination and peer review. In Figures traced in light: On cinematic staging (2005), Bordwell undertakes a close examination of the directorial methodology of Greek director Theo Angelopolous and Japanese director Kenji Mizoguchi: two exceptional proponents of the long-take mise-en-scène shooting style. In Notes: On the making of Apocalypse Now (1993), Eleanor Coppola describes a similar directorial methodology used by Francis Ford Coppola. And in Sherman's Directing the film: Film directors on their art (1976) other notable directors describe similar methodologies. This paper sets out the directorial methodology used in the production of the film Gingerbread Men, the creative component of my Doctorate of Creative Arts, and describes how that methodology is grounded in the work of significant directors.

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An actor's performance, as it appears on screen, is unstable. The viewing audience has no way of knowing to what extent the performance was the actor's creation in front of the camera when the scene was filmed, or re-constructed, with the help of the editor and director, in post-production. Editors will often describe how they took a look from this take, a sentence from that take, a reaction from yet another take, and then had the actor ADR (automated dialogue replacement) that line that had a slight word stumble in

it (Seger, 1994; Rosenblum, 1979; Travis, 2002; Bare, 2000; Proferes, 2008). Only when the actor's performance is captured in such a way that it remains as stable, and un-recreated, as possible can a director claim to have read the actor's performance when it was created and recognised it as being satisfactory, meaning that it presents the appropriate emotional state for the character at that point in the story/film. This paper outlines the process I pursued to determine the most suitable methodology to adopt in the production of a creative work short-film.

Gingerbread Men is the 29-minute short-film that forms the creative work component of my Doctor of Creative Arts candidature. I used the making of this film to explore how a director reads the actors' performances on set, while the camera is rolling, during that short period of time that can be considered the moment the film is created.

From the very beginning of cinematic analysis critics, theorists and scholars have predominantly concentrated their examination on the solid, stable ground of a finished film—or, as some preferred to call it, the "text".

Robert Stam makes this quite clear in *Film theory: An introduction*:

The object of film theory—films themselves—is profoundly international in nature. (2000, p. 4)

Although, at this point in the book, Stam is discussing the universality of cinema, he plainly recognises that considering and discussing the finished film is the dominant arena of many film scholars. Any film scholar, anywhere in the world, is able to watch a finished film, such as *Casablanca* (1942), and analyse the film. Excepting the slight variations of different release prints, *Casablanca* is fixed in time. David Bordwell also supports this point-of-view in *Figures traced in light: On cinematic staging* (2005):

Most scholars concerned with particular films have concentrated on interpreting them at a fairly high level of generality. The scrutiny of style that is common place in art history or musicology has still not become well established in film studies.

Both these film scholars have identified that by far the bulk of scholarly writing in the area of film studies has focused on the film as a text, and not on the production process that created the film.

Up until recently film studies have, to a certain extent, shied away from a widespread investigation of directorial practice during filmmaking—the actual act of directing a film. The study of screen acting, which is closely tied to directing, is another area that has been less than extensively examined. Recently, Baron and Carson (2006) put together a special issue of the *Journal of Film and Video* specifically to help advance the academic study of screen performance:

The idea for this special issue of the *Journal of Film and Video* evolved over the past few years from stimulating interaction at formal presentations and panels, as well as from exciting informal conversations. Our desire to advance the analysis and understanding of screen acting, to help build vocabularies for analyzing performance, and to explore integral connections between framing, editing, sound design, and performance elements led to the anthology *More Than a Method: Trends and Traditions in Contemporary Film Performance* (Wayne State, 2004), co-edited with Frank P. Tomasulo. In launching that endeavour, we found a vibrant area of study underrepresented in academic discourse . . . (Baron, 2006)

There are two things worthy of note in the above quote. Firstly, that screen acting studies is an underrepresented area in academic discourse, so much so that in 2006 this

under-representation was considered serious enough to devote a special issue so as to draw attention to this area.

Secondly, that Baron and Carson speak of a desire “to explore integral connections between framing, editing, sound design, and performance elements” (Baron, 2006), yet they do not identify the role of the director as having a material relationship with screen performance. Perhaps this is because the actor-director relationship exists outside the film as a text. This oversight, regarding the impact that the director has in shaping screen performance, has echoes of the 1989 Academy Awards, where *Driving Miss Daisy* (1989) won four Oscars, including Best Picture, and Best Actress, for Jessica Tandy, but Bruce Beresford was not nominated for Best Director, which caused a minor scandal at the time. Lou Lumenick raised this unusual case of the unrecognised director in a column he wrote in the New York Post in 2009:

Since I started handicapping Oscar races in 1981, only on one occasion has a movie won Best Picture without receiving a Best Director nomination—1988 [it was in fact 1989], when *Driving Miss Daisy* pulled off an upset without a corresponding nomination for Bruce Beresford. Best Picture wins without Best Director nods—whether the director wins or not—are so rare during the academy’s 82-year history that when Oscar nominations come out, us prognosticators usually begin by crossing these unfortunate movies off the list. (Lumenick, 2009)

Reviewing the 1989 Academy Awards on his website, *Madbeast.com* actor and writer Jon Mullich makes the same point:

Driving Miss Daisy is a perfectly unobjectionable Best Picture selection, and it is refreshing to find such an unpretentious, simple film on the roster of Oscar fame. But the Academy didn’t seem all that enthusiastic about its top choice, denying it the usually perquisite Best Director nomination for Bruce Beresford that accompanies a Best Picture (*Wings* and *Grand Hotel* are the only other Oscar winners not to receive a Best Director nominations, but they were both released in an era when only three directors could be nominated as opposed to today’s five), and producer Richard D. Zanuck somewhat bitterly (and justifiably) objected to Beresford’s lack of recognition in his Oscar acceptance speech. (Mullich, 2009)

We cannot know why Beresford was not nominated, but we do know that culturally the film director has often been presented in a romanticised fashion, as someone whose practice is steeped in feelings, shrouded by the mystery of creative muses and seemingly impenetrable individual creative choices—thus giving the impression that their creative practice is problematic, and therefore beyond analysis. However, in the field of musicology the creative practise of conductors is academically well understood (Parton, 2009), and is taught in universities and conservatoriums throughout the world, as is the creative practice of authors, painters, designers and other disciplines in the creative arts. So there must be a way to analyse the creative practice of a film director on the set as they direct—the act of directing itself, and in particular how they direct actors when filming a scene—rather than simply identifying the director’s work from the completed film.

Much of what directors do is located within their mind. It is neither visible nor stable nor easily accessed. Directors do the majority of their work verbally, not physically. One can see the consequences of their thinking in the actions of the actors and the movement of the camera. However, not even directors themselves seem to be able to fully articulate what they did or why they did it, or how they arrived at thinking that what they did was the correct thing to do. Directors often talk about just knowing when the performance is right. Yet when asked how they know, and what do they mean by

“right”, the answer is usually the same. They just know. According to dual Academy winning director Sydney Pollack:

If a director cannot tell the difference between a fake bit of behaviour and a true bit of behaviour, they have no business directing. It’s not something that can be learned. You have to know the difference between truth and fiction. How do you teach somebody the difference? You can’t. It’s something intuitive, you just know it. It’s called perception. Somebody is or isn’t perceptive. That’s all you have, as a director, the ability to recognize reality in behaviour. (Stevens, 1997)

Polanyi (1958; 1967; 1983) calls this kind of knowledge tacit knowledge; knowledge that is known, but difficult to articulate; “we know more than we can tell” (Polanyi, 1983). Borrowing from one of Polanyi’s models might help us understand one aspect of what occurs when a director reads an actor’s performance.

In the case of a human physiognomy, I would now say that we rely on our awareness of its features for attending to the characteristic appearance of a face. We are attending from the features to the face, and thus may be unable to specify features. And I would say, likewise, that we are relying on our awareness of a combination of muscular acts for attending to the performance of a skill. We are attending from these elementary movements to the achievement of their joint purpose, and hence are usually unable to specify their elementary acts. We may call this the functional structure of tacit knowing. (Polanyi, 1983)

Using this Polanyi model, we can say that when a director is watching, or reading, an actor’s performance they are attending *from* what the actor is doing (the craft of acting) *to* the performance (the result of the acting craft). Hence, a director might not be able to tell you everything that the actor did: their vocal inflections, their body language, their eye movement. These elements of the performance are like the features of the face that Polanyi uses in his example. Nevertheless, a director would be able to describe the performance to a certain extent, just like Polanyi’s example of the subject being able to describe the face, without being able to describe the features.

This, in turn, calls attention to the performance relationship that exists between the director and the actor, and the creative processes that occur on the set while the film is being made. Filmmaking is a collaborative creative process. Generally, when making a film directors, and even writer/directors, work in close creative collaboration not only with actors, but also producers, production designers, directors of photography and editors, plus a host of other crewmembers.

Seger and Whetmore stress this point. One of the key findings that came out of the sixty interviews they conducted with some of Hollywood’s most successful writers, producers, directors, actors, production designers, cinematographers, editors and composers is that filmmaking is a collaborative art:

In today’s Hollywood the production of a major motion picture is not the work of one “auteur” director. Nor is it the result of the latest whim of a box-office superstar who helps draw the audience to the theatre. These perceptions are quite popular in the press and in certain film schools. They are wrong.

The truth is that by the time the script appears on the screen, it is the product of the collective effort of writers, producers, directors, actors, cinematographers, editors, composers, and others who have laboured for years to bring it to life. (Seger, 1994)

It is this close creative collaboration, this fusing of a creative team from varying backgrounds, that enriches the creative choices and possibilities that imbue a film. *The Godfather* (1972) would have been a very different film had it not been directed by

Francis Ford Coppola, photographed by Gordon Willis, designed by Dean Tavoularis, and the characters parts performed by Al Pacino, Diane Keaton, Marlon Brando, Robert Duvall, Talia Shire and John Cazale. When Coppola made *The Godfather II*, in 1974, he assembled the same cast (minus Brando, whose character had died) and key creative team. Sixteen years later, in 1990, Coppola again called upon Al Pacino, Diane Keaton, and Talia Shire, as well as Willis and Tavoularis for *The Godfather III*.

However, what is and is not the work of the director is not always clear. The documentary, *Visions of Light* (1992), about US cinematographers can help us understand the impact that creative individuals have on what is perceived as the work of the director. In the documentary, Néstor Almendros and Haskell Wexler, both celebrated cinematographers, speak about their work on *Days of Heaven* (1978), directed by Terrence Malick, and at one point Wexler jokes about how he has a different shooting style to Almendros.

Almendros commenced the film as the director of photography, but because the film went over schedule, he had to leave to work on *Goin' South* (1978), directed by Jack Nicholson. The producers brought in Wexler to replace Almendros. During one particular scene, Wexler used a lens filter, because it was a quick and easy way of achieving a particular look. This is the scene where Richard Gere shovels coal into a furnace. Wexler knew Almendros would disapprove of his using a lens filter. In the documentary, Almendros says he loathes the use of filters, and much prefers to achieve the look he wants through careful lighting and choice of lens. Nevertheless, Wexler did it anyway. He knew that it would make the scene look different from the scenes that Almendros had shot, but he also felt that he had to be true to his own creativity.

This is a clear example of a situation where the director, Terrence Malick, ended up with a film, *Days of Heaven*, that had two different looks—because it changed cinematographers during production. As the director, Malick was only able to control the mise-en-scène up to a point.

The actor's performance is also part of the mise-en-scène. According to David Bordwell, in *Figures traced in light: On cinematic staging*, the French critics who came after Bazin, and wrote in *Cashiers du cinéma*, such as Eric Rohmer, Jacques Rivette, Francois Truffaut, and others saw mise-en- scène as:

... all the factors that the director could control during the shooting—the performances, the blocking, the lighting, the placement of the camera. Thus Hollywood directors, who may not have worked on the film's script and might have no say in editing, could still decisively shape the film at the mise-en-scène phase. (Bordwell, 2005)

However, the *Days of Heaven* example clearly shows that a director has variable control of the mise-en- scène, which includes actor performance. Hence, I needed a directorial methodology that allowed me to control as much of the actor mise-en-scène as possible in order to explore how directors read an actors' performance on set. When directing I would only get one chance to see the actors' performance and I would be making decisions about the performance in real time.

In order to achieve this, I had to remove, as much as stylistically possible, any opportunity to re-create, re-build, re-work, improve or save the actors' performance during editing, in order to maintain the validity of the experiment I was undertaking. By doing this, the decisions I made about the actors' performance, at the time I read them on the set, would be permanently fixed, and thus be open for review and criticisms.

Consequently, ADR (automated dialogue replacement) was out of the question. No ADR work was done on *Gingerbread Men*.

This was very important to me, because the ability to alter the actors' performance during editing would undermine what I was setting out to explore. Once in post-production, the director has the opportunity to watch an actor's performance many times over. Each time it is possible for the director to see more deeply into the performance, compare it to other takes, and make a final determination about its quality. This can be weeks, if not months, after it was filmed.

It is quite commonplace for directors, editors and producers to re-create an actor's performance during editing. I have done so on numerous productions. Standard continuity camera coverage results in directors shooting several shots of different sizes, and from varying angles, to film a scene. Thus, it is quite normal for a director to film several shots, each with numerous takes, of an actor delivering the same line of dialogue, gesture, or movement around the set. In doing so, the director has a vast number of alternatives from which to re-create each actor's performance.

Later, in the editing suite, the director and the editor select the best moments from each of the print takes, and combine them together to create what appears to be a seamless performance. Bordwell (2005, p. 23) analyses a 3½-minute scene from *Jerry McGuire* (1996) directed by Cameron Crowe, that has over 67 edits, at an average shot length of only 3.2 seconds. This sequence is comprised of several different shots, from different angles, and there would have been multiple takes of each shot.

This might be the reason that Seger and Whetman feel the editor is in a very privileged position, because they get to see every shot, every print taken again and again in the calm environment of the editing suite, rather than the intense pressure of a film set. However, because the editor's job is to select the best moments from the full range of shots filmed, and build them into a coherent scene, continuity of performance becomes critical. Joe Hutshing, the editor of *Wall Street* (1987), *Born on the Fourth of July* (1989), *JFK* (1991) and *Indecent Proposal* (1993), believes actor continuity is the editor's friend:

Everyone has a way of approaching it, but someone like Martin Sheen is the same in every take and every take is excellent . . . you can transfer the words from one take into another because he gives them at the same pace. He's an editor's dream.

Other actors experiment more. Robert Redford does things differently each time. And maybe the actions don't always match, but I enjoy the fact that Redford gives you the option of all these different takes. He'll give you a lot of choices about which way you can go. (cited in Seger, 1994)

Bill Reynolds, the editor of *The Sound of Music* (1965), *The Sting* (1973), and *The Turning Point* (1977), has a different view about the editor's relationship with the actor and the actor's performance. Reynolds believes that editors are often required to rescue a bad performance, and must be creative in the way they use different shots and takes and how they join them together into something that was never achieved on set—in other words, to create a performance that the actor never created:

You can save a bad performance by placing a part of his [the actor's] dialogue on his back or on the cut-aways to other actors. You might place the dialogue offstage or have someone else react to what is being said off stage. (cited in Seger, 1994)

Clearly, this is an effective production style, and is common place throughout the industry, because it allows for the re-creation of the performance in post-production,

thus ensuring the best possible scene makes it up onto the screen, even though the performance is a reconstruction, or might never have even existed as a single entity. In fact, as Bill Reynolds points out, an editor could edit together a performance that was greater than the sum of its parts, by the skilful application of editing techniques. In this situation, the director is deliberately gathering sufficient raw material to create the performance and the scene in editing. Ron Howard makes this clear when he states, “If all else fails shoot a master and shoot overs (over-the-shoulder shots) and singles” (cited in Stevens, 1997).

Allan Dwan, director of *Sands of Iwo Jima* (1949) makes the same point:

I tell you, if you know what you’re doing, and your actors are good, things pop along. Actors will sometimes say, “gee, I could have done that better,” and I always say, “we’ll fix it in the close-ups; we’ll save it.” (cited in Sherman, 1976)

Because the actors’ performance can be, and usually is, altered by editing, the directorial methodology I adopted would ultimately determine how useful my framework would be for examining the results. The standard multi-shot approach—covering everything with multiple shots from multiple angles—would deliver less meaningful results, because the actors’ performance could be recreated in editing, thus minimising the validity of how I read the actors’ performance on set. To avoid this, I needed to find a more constraining, and editorially closed, directorial methodology, one that would very severely restrict my post-production options.

According to Bordwell (2005), cinematic staging falls into two categories: the longer takes of yesteryear, when mainstream Hollywood directors created the rhythms and performance of a scene in a single beautifully choreographed, carefully crafted long shot; and the quick-fire cutting, multi-shot scene, or intensified continuity style, of the modern era—a staging style strongly influenced by the television close-up, music videos and television commercials.

However, one can also argue that the single-shot scene never really died, and is still alive in independent and art-house films. In Jim Jarmusch’s early film, *Stranger than Paradise* (1984), every scene is a single shot. The Turkish film, *Uzak* (Distant) (2002), written and directed by Nuri Bilge Ceylan and the winner of many international awards, has a similar single shot per scene, long-take structure.

Nonetheless, Bordwell’s point is that there has been a significant shift in mainstream cinema over the past few decades. There was a time when even big budget action war movies were shot with carefully framed and choreographed shots, and hand-held shots were rare. In recent years, it is not uncommon for films to be shot entirely hand-held, and edited in an abrupt style that draws attention to the editing—a directorial style that deliberately confronts the traditional continuity style. Lars von Trier’s film, *Dancer in the Dark* (2000), is but one such example, as are *Cloverfield* (2008) and *Quarantine* (2008).

In contrast, Bordwell lauds Greek director Theo Angelopoulos and Japanese director Kenji Mizoguchi as directors who perfected the art of long-take mise-en-scène cinematic staging. One could also add here the work of Otto Preminger, particularly in the film he made with Frank Sinatra and Kim Novack, *The Man with the Golden Arm* (1955), which uses a cinematic staging technique similar to that of Angelopoulos and Mizoguchi.

One reason both Angelopoulos and Mizoguchi favoured the long-take approach to cinematic staging is because the rhythm and power of the actors performance in a scene is allowed to fully develop.

In tracing out a history of film style, Bazin distinguished between “directors who put their faith in the image” and “directors who put their faith in reality.” Image-based directors built their style around painterly manipulations of the image (such as German Expressionism) or juxtapositions of images (such as the intellectual montage of Soviet filmmakers). By contrast, directors who put their faith in reality made cinematic art out of certain phenomenal features of the world, such as temporal continuity and spatial adjacency. Bazin believed that F.W. Murnau, Jean Renoir, Orson Wells, William Wyler and the Italian neorealists built very different styles out of the cinema’s power to capture the concrete relations of people and objects knit into the seamless fabric of reality. (Bordwell, 2005)

Other directors also believe that the long-take shooting style produces a type of performance that is inherently different from that obtained by using the intense continuity style montage technique. The examples below come from Sherman (1976), *Directing the film: Film directors on their art*.

I prefer the long takes because you can put a lot inside of the take. You build through a lot of things, the atmosphere around, certain kind of detail. Certain kind of mood, certain kind of passage in the thought, and attitude, physical attitude, too. In “montage,” you have to split things up. When you have a short take, it’s more difficult to put in a lot. So you have to divide, and the whole thing becomes a demonstration instead of something which is contextual to the thing. (Rossellini, cited in Sherman, 1976)

John Huston has a similar opinion:

The best scenes I’ve ever shot, so far as the camera is concerned, are never commented on. I move the camera a great deal . . . It will go from a medium shot to a close-up, back to a two-shot of people walking or something else, and they get into a car and the car drives away. Now these shots are almost ballet. The camera is having a dance with the actors and the scene. These are never seen if they are good. The audience never sees them, never realizes what’s happening. (cited in Sherman, 1976)

As does Paul Williams, the director of *The Revolutionary*:

In a film like *The Revolutionary*, you have to shoot very, very fast. I wanted to get a certain level of performance from the cast. I spent a lot of time and effort on performance. Whenever there was a choice to be made, I would always go for performance rather than for coverage. That may seem like an artificial dilemma, except that it wasn’t in this case . . . So, very often it is a matter of deciding how to do a scene in an interesting way, visually, but extremely simply and with very long takes . . . You find that half of the scenes in *The Revolutionary* are one shot. Sometimes they are fairly carefully worked out, but still just one shot. (Sherman, 1976)

Vincent Sherman, on the other hand, is critical of this technique:

Sol Polito made me conscious of one thing. He said, “Why take scenes that are too long and make the actors sweat it out when you know that they are going to be cut?” So, I really only made cuts when I felt that it would be necessary. I didn’t want the actors to go through those long four-minute scenes when you knew damn good and well that you were going to have to cut them anyway. (Sherman, 1976)

In the end, however, as the experiment I was setting up was to test my ability to read the actors’ performance on set, I felt that adopting the cinematic style of Angelopoulos and Mizoguchi, and others, would be the most suitable, because using the long-take would mean that I had to read the actors’ performance correctly on set, for the entire take.

It also meant that I had to give the actor sufficient direction to carry them through the entire scene. One of the advantages of multi-shot, standard continuity style coverage is that the director can give the actor specific notes for that part of the scene they already know will be shot and edited as the wide shot, and additional notes for the other shots.

By presenting the actors' performance in a single shot and thus removing any possibility of re-shaping the performance in editing, I was placing the entire success or failure of the film on the actors' ability to deliver a credible performance for the entire scene, and on my ability to correctly read the actors performance at the very moment it was being created.

Bordwell quotes Steven Spielberg on this matter:

I'd love to see directors not shoot so many close-ups. I'd love to see directors trusting the audience to be the film editor with their eyes, the way you are sometimes with a stage play, where the audience selects who they would choose to look at while a scene is being played with two characters, four characters, six characters. There's so much cutting and so many close-ups being shot today . . . It's too easy for filmmakers. It's very easy to put somebody up against a wall and shoot a close-up, and they say the words and you go onto the next shot. (cited in Bordwell, 2005)

Eleanor Coppola recounts a situation during the making of *Apocalypse Now* (1979), where Francis Ford Coppola was directing a scene that took place in the French compound. During the filming of the dining scene, Francis Ford Coppola was having difficulty getting the actors to perform the scene the way he wanted. Here, Eleanor Coppola details the process that Francis Ford Coppola was trying to implement:

He [Francis] had the actors do the whole scene in one long piece, over and over, trying to get a sense of the experience of being at that table as a family, arguing with each other. Going through an experience together to produce moments of reality that you don't get when you shoot in pieces, two lines at a time. But it didn't work. Francis was really frustrated, because that technique of creating an experience has always given him some terrific moments and this time it didn't work. (Coppola, 1993)

This raises one of the fundamental dangers of the long-take style, and a possible reason it fell out of favour. For this directorial approach to be successful, everything, including the actors' performance, must come together in that single take. Any error, be it technical or performance, renders the whole take useless, and it must be re-shot. This is not only time-consuming, but can drain the creative energy of everyone, particularly the actors, resulting in a less than desirable outcome.

He [Francis] decided that maybe it was because they were French and the English lines were a barrier, or that some of them weren't professional actors. He was angry that the set had gone over budget, and he had tried to save money on casting. He kept saying, "An audience doesn't give a shit about the authentic antiques on the set, they care about the people in the scene". (Coppola, 1993)

Coppola is in agreement with Houston on this point. As we have seen, Houston believes that his best work—those long camera shots—are never seen, because the audience is focused on the actors, and how the story unfolds through them. Coppola was seeking the same thing, but on this occasion it was not working.

Vittorio wanted to break the scene into little pieces and do just a couple of lines at a time until it worked. That's the way they do it in Europe. Francis said that when Bobby De Niro first worked with Bertolucci, he said it drove him crazy because he never got to develop the character from doing the whole scene, he had to play it line by short line. The European

approach is to start with the frame, and get each frame right. Francis works by getting the emotion of the scene going and asking the camera to capture it. This morning, Francis is going to try it in short pieces. (Coppola, 1993)

It is clear from the passages above that what Coppola was trying to achieve was a situation where the entire performance was created on the set at the time of filming in order to capture the genuineness of emotion that exists when all the actors deliver the desired performance at the same time over the duration of the entire scene, and the director is able to read that performance as being right at the time.

Clearly, from the frustration displayed by Coppola, he was reading that not all the performances were right at the same time. Vittorio's idea of dividing the scene into little bits went against Coppola's belief, as expressed in the example he cites of De Niro becoming frustrated with Bertolucci because he never felt he was able to fully enter the character's emotional space due to the staccato shooting style.

The fact that a frustrated Coppola returned the following day and shot the scene in little bits, and then the scene was left out of the first release of the film, might be seen as an indication that Coppola was reading the performances correctly, and that his dissatisfaction with the inconsistency of the actors' performances was the result of a finely tuned directorial instinct. In the first release of *Apocalypse Now* (1979), the entire French compound sequence ended up on the cutting room floor. It was, however, included in the *Apocalypse Now Re-dux* version that was released in 2001.

Not every scene in *Gingerbread Men* is a single-shot scene, although the majority are. There are a few of scenes, such as where Jess comes over to help Tony dig up the garden, that used multi-shot coverage. Because of the emotional need to stage Jess and Tony digging at different ends of the garden, there is quite a significant spatial gap between them and, with the need to be able to see both their faces, I had little choice but to introduce additional shots. However, the number of shots filmed was kept to an absolute minimum.

Of course, this does not mean that I shot only one take of each scene. Shooting just one take was neither practical nor good directing, in any sense. Often the actors made mistakes. They would stumble over some words or simply forget their lines. At times, while moving around the set they would accidentally step out of the light. As in all films, technical problems were common. The camera operator would mis-frame the shot, or the camera move was not smooth, or the focus was not sharp, or the boom pole would drop into frame. All these types of occurrences would render the take unusable.

There were also times when, as a director, I was uncertain about whether the actors had delivered the right performance, and so I would ask them to perform it again. At other times, the actors' delivery of the dialogue was perfect, but their physical actions were not evocative, or they had mistimed an action, or there something awkward about their body language. The most common reason we went for another take was that the actors' performance was not consistent throughout the entire scene. When we re-shot these scenes, I gave the actors notes about which moments worked and which moments did not. It was through this careful reshaping that I was able to assist the actors to deliver the quality performances that they achieve in the film.

Upon reflection, I believe that adopting the long-take directorial methodology, as used by Angelopoulos, Mizoguchi, Coppola and others, was a useful methodology that allowed me to explore reading the actors' performance on set. It also provided me with

useful insight into the next phase of my research, which will explore how a director reads an actor's performance, and how a director determines whether the performance is acceptable.

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