

THESIS

THE TEMPORAL ELEMENTS OF EMOTIONAL IDENTIFICATION WITH FILM
CHARACTERS

Submitted by

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In partial fulfillment of the requirements

For the Degree of Master of Arts

Colorado State University

Fort Collins, Colorado

Fall 2020

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ABSTRACT

THE TEMPORAL ELEMENTS OF EMOTIONAL IDENTIFICATION WITH FILM CHARACTERS

I argue that the subjective experience of time passing, felt duration, is a crucial element in the emotional and immersive experience of narrative films. First, I review multiple theories of emotional identification to conclude that the most accurate and thorough account is provided by the simulation theory of emotions. Growing from this account, I establish a framework of emotional engagement (general and emotional identification) and immersion (emotional and temporal). Film theories about emotional engagement often overlook felt duration despite it being a feature of emotional experiences. A film's depiction of a character's felt duration facilitates the audience's emotional engagement and immersion. Additionally, the audience's felt duration can be manipulated by the film's pacing techniques to further engagement and immersion.

There are two main upshots of my thesis I will briefly outline in the last chapter: aesthetic value and ethical value. The emotional and temporal experiences of the audience are vital to the understanding of narratives and the experience of films. Emotional identification exercises our capacity to relate to other people. This affects our ability to empathize and treat other people. In this thesis, I draw attention to felt duration as an element of emotional engagement and immersion that often goes unacknowledged.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to thank the many individuals who have supported me on this project. I could not have done it without them. To my advisor, Dr. Domenica Romagni, thank you for all your time and guidance. You kept me moving and developing my ideas with the nudges and resources to put me on the right track. You provided essential guidance that I needed to accomplish this, thank you. To my partner, Stephen Williams, without your patience and solid support I would not have survived this past year in such health. Thanks for listening to my ridiculous rambling on this project as I developed and organized my thoughts. To my graduate family, my cohort, thank you for such a great environment to learn and grow. The memories I have of us are some of my most cherished memories and many days I survived off of our experiences together. Lastly, to my family, Ed, Tammey, Ashley, Christina, and MooMoo, without your support I would have never made it this far. Without all of you, I would have never written this.

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Introduction

Narratives have the power to make their audiences feel a range of emotions. It is part of their appeal and how many make lasting impressions. In my thesis, I will argue that the audience's emotional response is in part due to the narrative's presentation of characters and the narrative's ability to influence the audience's sense of time. Narrative films provide an exceptional way of exploring the relationship between emotions and temporal perception. When watching narrative films, it is commonplace to lose track of time and to be so emotionally invested in the film that for a little while the outside world fades away. How films shape the audience's temporal and emotional experience is an interconnected process. Becoming emotionally invested in a film and its characters directs the audience's focus away from themselves and time passing. Part of the draw and power films have hinge upon their ability to craft the audience's emotional and temporal experience. This thesis will explore how emotional engagement and temporal elements shape the audience's experience. I will argue specifically that emotional identification with characters and depictions of characters' temporal experiences help generate the audience's emotional and temporal immersion into the film.

The first chapter provides a foundation for understanding the audience's experience through the following concepts: emotional identification, emotional engagement, and immersion. In order to understand these concepts, I will review three theories of emotional identification. The review will focus on the theories' ability to meet three conditions: their basis in relating to other people, they are not dependent upon beliefs formed about the character through a reflective inferential process, and their allowance for variation in relating to characters. Analyzing Berys Gaut's imaginative and empathetic identification, Gregory Currie's and Robert M. Gordan's simulation theory of emotions, and Murray Smith's structure of sympathy, I will conclude that

the simulation theory of emotions most adequately fulfills the three conditions. After establishing this, I will explain how engagement and immersion will be understood. Emotional engagement can be split into two types: emotional identification and attitudes directed at the film or narrative. Emotional identification consists of the audience's emotional states that reflect those of the character's. The other form of emotional engagement is the attitudes directed at the film or characters. Immersion is characterized by the audience's loss of awareness of the actual world and their focus being occupied by the film's world. The two types of immersion I am concerned with are emotional and temporal. This provides the ground for Chapter 2, which explores the audience's emotional and temporal experience.

In the second chapter, I will explore the relationship between films, time, and emotions. My account proceeds as follows. First, I argue that the theories reviewed in the previous chapter overlook an important temporal element of emotional identification. Carla Merino-Rajme's discussion of *felt duration*, the experience of time passing, helps provide the missing element. Second, I point out that emotional experiences can involve particular felt duration, or the feeling of time passing slowly or quickly. Emotions also have a duration in how long they last. Third, I argue that films can depict a character's felt duration through many techniques, some of which are used to elucidate the character's emotional state. Fourth, I add that there are circumstances in which the film manipulates the audience's felt duration through pacing techniques. Finally, I conclude by discussing how both the characters' and the audience's felt duration play a significant role in the emotional engagement and immersion of the audience. The audience's experience of emotions is linked to their experience of time. Likewise, felt duration is a crucial factor in the audience's emotional engagement and immersion. A thorough account of the audience's experience includes their felt duration. Narrative films can use the relationship

between emotions and felt duration to craft an engaging and immersive experience for the audience.

In the third chapter, I review my argument for my readers and discuss its possible value and implications, both aesthetic and ethical. The audience's emotional and temporal experiences are valuable to understanding the narrative and they provide a more complete experience of the film. In showing felt duration's contributions to the understanding and experience of films, my thesis has implications for assessments of aesthetic value. Additionally, my thesis has ethical implication and value because our understanding of characters' experiences can transform into understanding other people's experiences. The emotional work we do when identifying with characters aids us in our understanding and treatment of other people. Thus, two implications of my theory I will outline are how felt duration can play a vital role in understanding films and how it can affect our ethical behavior. Although felt duration may be an overlooked element of the narrative film experience, my theory shows how it is a crucial element to the audience's emotional engagement and immersion.

Briefly, before delving into the content of this thesis, I will outline what is meant by 'emotion'. This thesis is primarily concerned with emotions as phenomenal experiences, that can be pre-reflective (without higher-level cognitive processing, reasoning, or awareness), and may have intentionality (be directed at or caused by something). These traits are consistent with Jenefer Robinson's non-cognitive theory of emotions.¹ Her theory of the emotional process requires, "a non-cognitive affective appraisal, and certain physiological responses, which might or might not be felt."² While my thesis is consistent with this theory of emotions and emphasizes

¹ Robinson, Jenefer. *Deeper Than Reason: Emotion and Its Role in Literature, Music, and Art* Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2005.

² Goldie, Peter. "Emotion." *Philosophy Compass* 2, no. 6 (November 2007): 928–938.

certain features of emotions, it can be compatible with many cognitive theories and other theories of emotions. I am not dedicated to a particular account of emotions or arguing for any particular view of emotions.

I. EMOTIONAL IDENTIFICATION, ENGAGEMENT, AND IMMERSION

In this chapter I will explore multiple theories of emotional identification and discuss their advantages and shortcomings. These theories provide an understanding of how the audience is compelled by and shares the emotions of a character. After exploring the multiple theories of emotional identification, I will use them to understand the emotional and temporal aspects of audiences' engagement and immersion in films.

When analyzing these theories of emotional identification, I have distinguished three conditions that are necessary for a satisfactory theory:

(1) The theory should account for our ability to relate both to other people and fictional characters. When interacting with other people, we have a sense of relating to them. When watching a narrative film, we also relate to the characters. The mechanism by which we have empathetic and sympathetic responses to other people is not exclusive to actual people, but is also used to relate to fictional characters. A theory which can account for how people relate with each other and characters is a more wholistic and parsimonious account of emotional engagement. Theories that assume no overlap in the way people relate to characters and other people carry the burden of proof.

(2) The identification cannot primarily rely upon an understanding of the characters built through reflective inferential processes. A reflective inferential process of identification would claim that the audience has to continually and consciously reflect on and infer beliefs about the character and how their minds work. These reflective understandings of characters do not account for all levels of engagement and immersion that can be achieved when experiencing a film. Engaging a film only through reasoning and cognition limits the

emotional investment of the audience. A theory that only relies upon reflective and inferred understandings does not account for all of the audience's experience.

(3) The theory should allow for the variance amongst why some viewers identify with certain characters while others do not. Some audience members may identify with certain characters, while other audience members identify with other characters more. The theory of emotional identification must allow for this variety in audience members' experiences.

A. Berys Gaut's Theory

The first theory of emotional identification I will analyze is Berys Gaut's. He separates his account of identification into two types: imaginative identification and empathetic identification.

Imaginative identification involves the audience member imagining themselves in the character's situation. This situation can refer to many different aspects of their story — not just their physical placement or the scenario surrounding them, but also the character's properties. Some of these properties are physical, like “size, physical position, the physical aspects of her actions, and so on.”³ Other properties include psychological ones like the character's perspective, how the character views the world, and their motivations, beliefs, and feelings about events.⁴ For example, the audience may be prompted to imaginatively identify with a character through having privileged epistemic access to that character. Sharing a character's discrete knowledge or being restricted to only one character's knowledge prompts the audience to epistemically identify

³ Berys Gaut, *A Philosophy of Cinematic Art* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 258.

⁴ Gaut, 258.

with the character.⁵ This epistemic link enables the audience to imagine themselves in the character's position more freely, thus facilitating at least one aspect of identification. By itself, epistemic identification can leave the audience blind to the character's feelings regarding the knowledge and how it impacts their motivations. However, identification through epistemic access is only one property of many to prompt imaginative identification with a character.

Imaginative identification with a character consists of imagining oneself to have at least some of the character's properties. However, according to Gaut, identifying with all the properties of the character is not possible, because "even a fictional character has an indeterminately large number of properties."⁶ So, on his view, the audience member finds the properties relevant to them as a means of identifying with the character and imagines having those properties. This imagining metaphorically places the audience member in the character's shoes, promoting an emotional response to the character and the narrative. Gaut's imaginative identification shows that we may be able to identify with certain aspects of a character, but not all.⁷ Only the aspects that are salient and relevant to the viewer are what serve as the means of identification, while other aspects remain unknowable or extraneous.

In contrast to imaginative identification, empathetic identification "requires the viewer actually to feel what a person (or character fictionally) feels."⁸ Empathetic identification allows the audience to feel as the character does without requiring imagination. Having an emotional reaction to the character's situation that aligns with the character's reaction can result from

⁵ Gaut, 264

⁶ Gaut, 259.

⁷ Gaut, 258

⁸ Gaut, 260

imaginative identification, but not necessarily. We must allow for “the possibility of real emotions directed towards situations known to be fictional.”⁹ For instance, the audience feels elated at the good news the character receives as they feel the same. Both types of identification can lead to feeling as the character does and, further, invest emotionally in the character and the narrative.

One of Gaut’s theory’s main benefits is the allowance that the aspects of imaginative identification can vary based upon what is salient to the viewer. One need not grasp all the properties of a character in order to identify with them. Due to film techniques, the viewer’s external environment, or personal history, specific properties may be more salient to the viewer. Gaut’s imaginative identification accounts for the viewers’ sensitivities to particular aspects because of their own perspectives and experiences. Sharing similar properties with the character eliminates the need for the viewers to imagine having such properties, thus aiding emotional identification. Gaut’s theory provides an explanation for why there is a variety of characters with which different individuals identify. Thus, Gaut’s theory not only satisfies condition (3) but can provide an explanation for the variance.

One disadvantage of Gaut’s theory is that it lacks an explanation of the mechanism for imagining and empathizing. Whether this imagining is achieved through an active reasoning process or some other process, possibly passively, is not addressed by Gaut. However, the process by which the audience imagines is paramount to understanding the nuances of emotional identification.¹⁰ Gaut’s theory satisfies condition (3) and (2) because his identification relies

⁹ Gaut, 261

¹⁰ Kendall L. Walton explains, “to allow that mere fictions are objects of our psychological attitudes while disallowing the possibility of physical interactions severs the normal links between the physical and psychological.” Walton brings a vital thread into this conversation because he recognizes that the emotions involved in identification

upon the process of imagining and feeling with consideration to the character's salient properties rather than reasoning through reflective inferences about a character. However, it fails to make the proper explanations and connections to satisfy (1) completely. To understand how one might be able to identify with characters more thoroughly, I will now turn to Gregory Currie's work and the simulation theory of emotions.

B. Currie, Gordan, and Simulation theory

Currie's account of emotional identification with fictional characters is grounded in how we understand the mental processes of others, satisfying condition (1). Currie explains that there are two primary theories of how we understand these processes: the "theory theory" and the simulation theory.¹¹

The "theory theory" posits that in order to understand what another person believes and desires, one must cognize and reason from given information. This differs from Gaut's

lack many characteristics of a typical emotional experience, like appropriate inputs and responses. This will be addressed more thoroughly in the following section. One thing to note here is that Walton's point seems to be at odds with my assertion in (1) that there is an overlap in how we relate to others and how we relate to characters. While it seems like there is a difference in how we react to actual people and fictional characters, there is a shared basis in our typical responses to the evoked emotional states. These responses can also be mitigated from certain expressions whether it is societal norms stopping a certain outward expression or due to the act of imagining that limits outward expressions.

Walton, Kendall L. "Fearing Fictionally" in *Arguing About Art: Contemporary Philosophical Debates*, ed. Alex Neil and Aaron Ridley (3rd ed., London: Routledge, 2008), 257-27

¹¹ Currie, Gregory. *Image and Mind: Film, Philosophy and Cognitive Science* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995. p. 145

In more recent years, additional theories of emotions have been challenging "theory theory" and simulation theory. These theories are based in social cognition and call for empathy or direct perception into the other person's mind without a simulation necessary. Additionally, there is the narrative practice hypothesis provided by Daniel D Hutto in which experiencing narratives about people acting for reasons allows children to understand basic elements of folk psychology and its application. Sources for the additional theories:

Hutto, Daniel D. *Folk Psychological Narratives: the Sociocultural Basis of Understanding Reasons* Cambridge, Mass: MIT Press, 2008.

Matravers, Derek and Anik Waldow. *Philosophical Perspectives on Empathy: Theoretical Approaches and Emerging Challenges*. New York: Taylor & Francis Routledge, 2019.

Zahavi, Dan. *Self and Other: Exploring Subjectivity, Empathy, and Shame*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014.

imaginative identification because there is no supposition of oneself (the audience) as the other person (the character) or as having their properties. According to "theory theory," rather than using their own mind as a framework, people reason and deduce from given information about a situation to hypothesize how others' minds will function and form their differing beliefs, desires, and feelings. The "theory theory" states that understanding the mental processes of others is an active process consciously executed to understand the other person's mental states. In describing "theory theory," Robert M. Gordon describes that it relies upon the assumption that, "unobservable mental states such as beliefs, desires, intentions, and feelings, [are] linked to each other and to observable behaviors by "lawlike" principles."¹² It treats the other person as if they are a sophisticated robot following strict rules and patterns. If one can reason out the other's programming and what kind of inputs they receive, then one can understand their outputs. However, this does not necessarily lead to identification with the other person or character as it "chiefly engages our intellect and makes no essential use of our own capacities for emotion, motivation, and practical reasoning."¹³ Like Gordon, Currie rejects "theory theory" in favor of simulation theory, which has imagination rather than theorizing taking centerfold.

The simulation theory of emotions claims that understanding other people's emotions does not need to rely upon our ability to theorize how others' minds work, but instead uses our own minds to model others' mental processes. Currie claims, "we do have a reliable model of the mental processes of others, namely our own mental processes run off line. Using the model, we are able to draw conclusions about other minds without having a theory of how minds, including

¹² Gordon, Robert M. "Sympathy, Simulation, and the Impartial Spectator." *Ethics* 105, no. 4 (1995): 731

¹³ Gordon 732

our own, work.”¹⁴ There is no need to reason out how their minds work as if they are a robot to us. Instead, we can use our own minds to model their mental processes. Our minds have the ability to imagine being in the other person’s position and simulate the experience to feel for ourselves what they are going through. He describes,

I imagine myself to be in the other’s person’s position, receiving the sensory information the other receives. Having thus projected myself imaginatively into that situation, I then imagine how I would respond to it: what beliefs and desires I would have, what decisions I would make and how I would feel having those perceptions, beliefs and desires, making those decisions... Imagining having certain beliefs and desires is not a matter of considering the proposition that I have those beliefs and desires, and then deducing, on the basis of a theory, what I would do as a consequence. Rather, I simply observe how I do respond in imagination. To imagine having those beliefs and desires is to take on, temporarily, those beliefs and desires; they become...my own beliefs and desires. Being, thus temporarily, my own, they work their own effects on my mental economy, having the sorts of impacts on how I feel and what I decide to do that my ordinary, real beliefs and desires have. I let my mental processes run as if I really were in that situation¹⁵

Currie extends this to apply to fictional characters. Films present a character’s position, state, and situation to the audience, and the audience takes in this information and compiles it to understand the character and what they might do. The audience imagines themselves as having those qualities of the character’s experience. By doing so, the audience comes to understand how the character might respond based on how their simulation unfolds. Thus, the simulation theory of emotions satisfies both conditions (1) and (2).

To provide a more thorough understanding of emotional simulation, I will briefly explore Robert M. Gordon’s theory. A substantial aspect Gordon brings into his building of simulation theory is emotional contagion and mimicry. Emotional contagion is catching another’s emotion

¹⁴ Currie 146

¹⁵ Currie 144

like one would a sickness (e.g., laughing when you are surrounded by others laughing). Mimicry of behaviors, facial expressions, and emotions is seen in infants and, at less overt levels, adults. This mimicry leads not only to the adaptation of the facial expressions but the emotions that accompany them.¹⁶ Mimicry is also used to understand the cause of such emotions by mimicking the other person's gaze and positioning. Mimicry and emotional contagion combine to allow a better understanding of the other person and their situation, resulting in the ability to predict or explain their behavior and emotions. This is the basis for simulation theory. Rather than theorizing about another person's mental states, we engage our basic social functions of mimicry and contagion to simulate the others' mental states, allowing us to feel their emotions.

Returning to Currie, he makes a crucial point about how the simulation process runs off-line. Our emotions are related to the sensory input we receive and are often expressed in our behavior. For example, the input of encountering a venomous snake on a hike can elicit fear, including the behavioral outputs of panic and avoidance. As Kendall Walton points out, the audiences of films do not undergo the typical outputs associated with the given inputs and emotions.¹⁷ In simulating another's emotions, Currie describes, "I let my mental processes run as if I really were in that situation – except that those processes run 'off-line', disconnected from their normal sensory inputs and behavioral outputs. In that way I use my own mind to simulate the mind of another."¹⁸ Although the audience simulates having the character's inputs and

¹⁶ In his article "A Simulation Theory of Musical Expressivity," Tom Cochrane acknowledges the interconnectivity of being able to feel an emotion and being able to recognize the feeling in others. He cites that there is "empirical evidence that when people become unable to experience a particular emotion, they develop a corresponding inability to recognize that emotion in others"

Cochrane, Tom. "A Simulation Theory of Musical Expressivity." *Australasian Journal of Philosophy* 88, no. 2 (June 1, 2010): 194.

¹⁷ Walton 257

¹⁸ Currie 144

emotions, their simulated mental processes are disconnected from the associated behavioral outputs. For instance, in a monster horror film, the audience members do not actually run out of the theater to get away from the monster, yell for everyone else to run, or arm themselves to attack the monster on screen. However, it is possible that when undergoing emotional simulation, a viewer might lack the proper inhibitor to keep the emotions from affecting behavior. In these cases, the audience might have a behavioral reaction to the simulated emotions regardless of the source being fictional. For example, a viewer might physically shift to put their back to a wall when watching a horror film in which characters are attacked from behind. To a lesser degree, a viewer might flinch when the character is dealt a nasty blow. Although the audience takes on mental states of the character as their own, the simulation must run mostly, if not entirely, offline from the behavioral outputs.

As tempting or convincing as simulation theory is, it fails to account for certain aspects of emotional identification. Under Currie's provided account and Gordon's rendering of simulation, the process primarily concentrates on predictive simulation. Predictive simulation focuses on understanding the person's mental states, emotions, and situation for the purpose of predicting their future actions. However, simulation theory does have the ability to account for emotional identification in a non-predictive scope. Audience members can retroactively synthesize information about a character to simulate them. This happens when new information is revealed about a character (or other person) that brings greater understanding of them in a previous scene (or interaction). This often occurs during character-induced plot twists. Additionally, simulation is a constant process and sometimes the audience is not given the space to form a predictive stance or retroactively synthesize information. In these cases, simulation is more of a perpetually present adaptation of information about the character. Rather than treating the character as

merely a vessel for past and future actions, simulation focused on constant adaptation treats the character as a phenomenon of consciousness. Simulating the character as a constant experience mitigates the impact of the audience's predictive leanings and retrospective understandings on their emotional identification. Each form of simulation (i.e. predictive, retrospective synthesis, and constant adaptation) makes up the experience of emotional simulation with characters.¹⁹ Simulation theory can account for all three even if the provided accounts primarily focus on predictive.

While both "theory theory" and simulation theory are applicable to others and fictional characters, fulfilling condition (1), "theory theory" fails to meet condition (2) while simulation theory succeeds. "Theory theory" is based upon conscious reflection, inferential understandings, and theorizing about the character's mental processes, failing condition (2). Simulation theory describes identification as using our own capacities rather than having to reason out and theorize about the emotional capacities of others, fulfilling condition (2). For condition (3), both theories are insufficient. "Theory theory"'s reliance upon cognition and explicit reasoning does not allow for the variance in identification required for condition (3). However, simulation theory seems to simply not address the variance in identification. It should allow for a level of personalization or an account of why some characters are easier to identify with over others. As seen in Gaut's imaginative identification, emotional identification should account for how viewers can be sensitive to some properties of particular characters more than others. Simulation theory only provides a blanket identification explanation and not an account for why there is variation in

¹⁹ Although I have made distinctions between the three types in order to describe them, they are not necessarily experienced as clear and distinct modes of simulation. The simulation process can blend them and have them happen at such a rate that it is hard to determine the boundaries between one mode and another. They also interact and build off of one another in simulating the character's mental states and actions.

particular viewers identifying with a particular array of characters. While there is no account for this variance, simulation theory can allow for it and satisfy condition (3). As we will see in the next section, Murray Smith will provide an account for such gradations in identifications.

C. Murray Smith and the Structure of Sympathy

Turning to Murray Smith's *Engaging Characters, Fiction, Emotion, and the Cinema*, Smith provides an account that goes beyond simulation theory that builds a schema of engagement through empathy and sympathy.²⁰

Smith builds his theory of simulation as “voluntary,” while “motor and affective mimicry and autonomic reactions are involuntary.”²¹ Gathering a theory of simulation from Wollheim and Gordon²², Smith characterizes it as, “the process of simulation-and-hypothesis-formation.”²³ Under this formation, the audience member would hypothesize based upon known things about the situation and would make up, “a form of ‘affective trial and error’ through which we build up a picture of the states of others (or, in a fictional context, characters)”²⁴ Smith's formulation of simulation theory is more closely related to the reflective and inferential based “theory-theory,” and it is a purely predictive identification. Thus, Smith's formulation of simulation is susceptible to the flaws discussed in the above sections regarding “theory theory”'s treatment of the other as a sophisticated robot and the narrow scope of purely predictive simulation. Regarding mimicry,

²⁰ Although Smith does not classify his theory as identification but rather as engagement, it attempts to explain the emotional experience of films in a similar way to when ‘emotional identification’ is used by other authors.

²¹ Smith, Murray. *Engaging Characters: Fiction, Emotion, and the Cinema* Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1995. P. 96

²² Wollheim's *On Art and the Mind* and Gordon's *The Structure of Emotions: Investigations in Cognitive Psychology*

²³ Smith 98

²⁴ Smith 98

Smith characterizes it as involuntary response, and the audience member can only gain a vague emotion without the more complexity included with the voluntary simulation.²⁵

When approaching the engagement of the audience with the character, Smith separates sympathy and empathy. Empathy refers “to reactions we have to the states of others which are distinct from sympathy in that they do not require the perceiver to share any values, beliefs, or goals with the perceived.”²⁶ Sympathy requires a “sharing” of mental attributes, whereas empathy is the “imaginative substitution” of the viewers’ mental states with the characters’ mental states. Due to this distinction, Smith characterizes mimicry and simulation as only a type of empathy and not sympathy. Incorporating this with the understandings mentioned above, mimicry is an involuntary substitution of the viewer’s emotions with the character’s, while simulation is the willful engagement in the substitution. Further elaborating upon the distinction between empathy and sympathy, Smith notes

the sympathetic phenomena require comprehension of the narrative situation and characters, unlike the empathetic phenomena. . . In the case of sympathetic responses, we cognitively recognize an emotion and then respond with a different but appropriate emotion based on our evaluation of the character, while in the case of the empathetic responses, we simulate or experience the same affect or emotion experienced by the character.²⁷

As we already discussed simulation and mimicry in the previous section and have established how Smith’s construal relates to the previous versions, we will focus on Smith’s sympathy.

Smith provides three categories that build “the structure of sympathy”: recognition, alignment, and allegiance. Recognition is, “the perception of a set of textual elements, in film

²⁵ Smith 101

²⁶ Smith 96

²⁷ Smith 102

typically cohering around the image of a body, as an individuated and continuous human agent.”²⁸ Having a character be recognized as an individual with qualities that pertain to characters is the main step in being able to emotionally identify with them. In films, this recognition is not entirely dependent upon visual cues, but they are often the most crucial to the process. These visual cues are the body, facial features, mannerisms, but the character’s voice and language can also contribute to recognition. An additional aspect of recognition is acknowledging the character’s “complexity, fixity, stereotypically, plausibility, artificiality, attachment, and subjective transparency”.²⁹ Recognition is essential for alignment and allegiance.

Alignment is, “the process by which spectators are placed in relation to characters in terms of access to their actions, and to what they know and feel”.³⁰ Smith divides alignment into, its “two interlocking functions: spatio-temporal attachment and subjective access”.³¹ Spatio-temporal attachment is how the narrative may follow a character’s physical presence and timeline through the narrative.³² This attachment is even sometimes split amongst multiple characters providing less focus and limiting the exclusivity of attachment. Spatio-temporal attachment may overlap with the character’s subjective access. Subjective access refers “to the way the narration may vary to the degree to which the spectator is given access to the subjectivities – the dispositions and occurrent states – of characters.”³³ Point-of-view shots and

²⁸ Smith 82

²⁹ Smith 116

³⁰ Smith 83

³¹ Smith 83

³² Smith 142

voice-overs are among more explicit ways films can provide subjective access but are not the only ways. The music, acting, and film shots can contribute to understanding the mental states of characters.³⁴ In the next chapter, I will explore a particular form of subjective access through depictions of felt duration.

Allegiance is “the moral evaluation of characters by the spectator”.³⁵ This moral evaluation can lead to different spectators identifying with different characters. Smith describes, “we talk of ‘identifying with’ both persons and characters on the basis of a wide range of factors, such as attitudes related to class, nation, age, ethnicity, and gender”.³⁶ In allegiance, these factors, other physical factors, the character’s actions, and the music associated with the character lead the audience into an evaluation and identification with the character.³⁷ The audience’s understanding of the character’s moral stance and why the character has that stance contributes to their evaluation of the character. The resulting evaluation of the character can fuel an identification or a refusal to identify with the character.

In summation, Murray Smith provides an explanation for the variance amongst identification, satisfying condition (3). However, his empathy and sympathy rely too heavily upon theorization and understandings built through reflective inferences, thus, fails to satisfy (2). In regards to basing his theory upon how we relate to others, it partially satisfies condition (1).

³³ Smith 142

³⁴ Subjective access overlaps with Gaut’s epistemic identification. Having exclusive knowledge of that character’s mental states and their knowledge aligns the audience member with them.

³⁵ Smith 84

³⁶ Smith 84

³⁷ Smith 190-193

D. Engagement, Immersion, and Emotional Identification

For this last section of the chapter, I will first establish my own framework of engagement and immersion. Then I will explore how the theories of emotional identification fit into this framework and provide an understanding of the audiences' experiences of films. This will lead into the next chapter discussing the temporal features of the audience's experience.

Engagement with a film can comprise of many actions and states. At a basic level, to be engaged with a film means to be invested in the film with some mental stance relating to the film or its content. One type of engagement, and the type that is most central to my discussion, is emotional engagement. *Emotional engagement* consists of two subtypes. First, emotional engagement involves attitudes directed at the film or its content. These attitudes exist with an external perspective to the character, film, narrative, scene, or situation. Second, emotional engagement includes emotional identification. While some forms of emotional identification account for the attitudes directed at the characters or film, I am separating these forms of engagement, because there is a distinction between external attitudes directed at the film and the internal position required of emotional identification. The audience's attitude originates in observing and adjusting to the film from an external perspective; the audience is merely observing and reacting to the content of the film, not placing oneself within it to feel as the characters do. *Emotional identification*, the other subtype of emotional engagement, involves the audiences' mental states in relation to the mental states of the characters. It is the process of understanding and relating to the character. All emotional engagement involves the mental states and emotions of the audience members; however, only emotional identification places the audiences' mental states internal to the film's content, to the mental states of characters. Emotional engagement with a film, in both these senses, is crucial to being immersed in a film.

The *immersion* of a viewer into a film is characterized by the audience's lack of awareness of the actual world while their attention and awareness are occupied and overwritten by the film's world. The audience loses awareness of their status as a viewer and is, instead, submerged into the film's perceptual and intellectual context. The attention and mental states of the audience become focused entirely on the film. This can, of course, happen in varying degrees and can fluctuate due to the film's engagingness and the audience member's willingness and susceptibility to being immersed. I am mostly concerned with two subtypes of immersion, emotional and temporal.

Emotional immersion consists of the audience's emotional capacities being taken over by the media where they no longer are concerned with emotions not involving the media (such as those directed at having to pay bills, getting gas for their car, or dealing with a coworker). Emotional immersion, and its intensity, depends on emotional engagement. For example, an audience member who is engaging in attitudes directed at the film techniques but is disengaged with any form of emotional identification is only partially immersed in the film; their emotional engagement includes recognition of themselves as a viewer. They never place their emotions and mental states within the fictional world. Rather, their emotions remain external to it and are focused on evaluating it. A distance between the viewer and the film's content is created by the viewer's emotional focus on the film techniques because those kinds of attitudes rely upon one's position as a viewer. In contrast, a viewer who is emotionally engaged and identifies with characters can be submerged into the character's mindset, and the viewer's emotions reflect the situation and reality occurring internal to the narrative. In this case, the awareness of oneself as a viewer is less salient to the viewer. Emotional engagement and its subtype, emotional identification, both provide emotional immersion into the film, but emotional identification

allows for a deeper level of emotional immersion because the viewer's emotions are internal to the film.

The level of emotional immersion can have a crucial impact on the viewers' temporal immersion. *Temporal immersion* occurs when the viewer's experience of time is subsumed by the film's temporal elements. Temporal immersion involves a loss of an independent experience of time and a reliance upon the film for a sense of time passing. The audience is so absorbed into the film that they lose their sense of time passing, and the film is the only thing providing any sense of time. The viewer's perception of time is dependent upon the film. The film can manipulate the viewer into feeling like time is passing slowly, rapidly, or normally. Similar to emotional immersion, temporal immersion can come in degrees. For example, a film can subject the viewer to an extremely long scene of an incredibly boring view that forces the audience to remember themselves as audience members and how much time this boring scene is taking. The film forced an immersed audience back into awareness of themselves as viewers external to the film's content. The viewer is temporally immersed and reliant upon the film for a sense of the passage of time. In being reliant upon the film, the film can manipulate the viewer's sense of time to even force the viewer out of engagement and immersion, like in the case of the long boring scene. A film can also use techniques, like the rapidity of cuts, to make it feel like time passes quickly. Sinking into a film's world allows the film to manipulate and dictate the audience's experience of time. One of the main goals in this project is to explore the relationship between emotional engagement and immersion with temporal immersion; thus, my discussion of felt duration in chapter 2.

The audience's level of immersion is immensely related to how a person engages with the film. Returning to emotional identification, it is the audience's process of bridging the gap

between their mental states and the character's mental states. Gaut's imaginative identification provides a compelling account for an aspectual framework of identification that explains the variance amongst viewers' experiences in emotional identification (condition (3)). However, this framework lacks a depth provided by the simulation theory of emotions and Murray Smith's structure of sympathy. Smith's structure of sympathy provides a process of engagement through recognition, alignment, and allegiance. This process of engagement can explain the variance amongst viewers' experiences in identifying with different characters. Smith provides an explanation for how details and properties of the characters can be more relevant, prominent, and salient to the audience through his recognition, alignment, and allegiance. Gaut's theory only acknowledges that there can be variance dependent upon which traits are relevant for the audience. The structure of sympathy provides a schema of how audience members are prompted to identify with characters and why there can be a variance in identification due to this schema. However, Smith's theory falls short on explaining how being emotionally invested can be an immersive experience because it relies too heavily on cognition and reflective inferential processes. This is why I will primarily rely upon the simulation theory of emotions as the foundation of emotional identification.

The simulation theory of emotions relies upon the audience using their own mental capacities to simulate/imagine themselves as having the same position, state, and situation as the characters on screen. The positioning of the character can refer to the physical area in which the character resides or the character's societal or moral position. The state of a character refers to both psychological and physical states of the character (e.g., their emotions, health, and condition). The situation of a character can overlap with the position of a character but generally refers to the narrative context surrounding the characters. Using one's own faculties to imagine

possessing these qualities as the character does, places the audience and their emotions within the narrative. Having an internalization of the character's elements in such a way brings about a more robust identification with the character resulting in a more emotionally engaged and immersive experience. Despite the immersion, this process still usually runs offline from typical outputs to keep the emotions from bleeding into real actions by the viewer. Part of this may be due to the voluntariness of simulation. While our emotional responses from mimicry and contagion are often involuntary, in adults, it "is typically subliminal, probably because overt mimicry tends to get inhibited," similar to our behavioral outputs.³⁸ As a child, scary scenes are often met with some kind of online response to fear. The child may start crying, screaming, or leave the room. In adults, we are usually able to voluntarily direct our emotional attention and keep emotional behaviors offline. When watching a scary part of a movie, the audience's engagement can sway away from emotional identification to more general emotional engagement in order to put more distance between their mental state and the characters experiencing terror. However, an immersed audience may still flinch, hold their breath, and shift their body position in reaction to the emotions felt through simulation. An audience that has internalized the simulation of a character's mental state in a deep immersion may even find themselves involuntarily responding to those states. There are gradations in which emotions can be simulated with an online or offline output; likewise, there is variance in how voluntary or involuntary our emotional focus and response is. These gradations and variance compose the fluctuations in the experience of emotional engagement and immersion.

Additionally, Smith's recognition, alignment, and allegiance can help determine why audiences emotionally simulate the mental states of certain characters over others'. In order to

³⁸ Gordon 729

simulate the mental states and emotions of a character, we must first recognize them as a character. This recognition may include the complexity that allows the audience to view them as an agent with desires and motivations beyond just their physical iconography. Without alignment, a character may not have the proper screen time or availability for the audience to identify with them. Spatio-temporal attachment provides time and attention to the character and their story for the audience incorporate more information into their simulation. Access to the subjective states of a character provides even more factors to include in the simulation. Allegiance allows the simulation to be more fruitful when the character and audience members share qualities, whether physical or value-driven. With fewer differing ideals and traits, the audience member's simulation is eased because their own ideals and traits fill in the simulation. There already is less of a gap between the character's mentality and the viewer's mentality. All of the "structures of sympathy" can aid and explain an audience's simulation and, thus, emotional identification with a character. The audience may even be aware of these forces pushing them to identify with one character more than another. These forces also provide an understanding of the fluctuation in the distance between the characters' and the audiences' mental states. However, without the internalization of the character's mental states through simulation, the structures of sympathy seem to only lead to a thorough understanding of the character and narrative without the placement or investment of one's mental state's inside the film's content. Recognition, alignment, and allegiance can provide emotional engagement, but without simulation, the audience would lack emotional identification.

Moving forward, it is important to remember a few things regarding an audience's engagement with films. This engagement can comprise both emotional identification and attitudes directed at and about the film and its content. While many of the theories I have

explored provide some accurate reflection of the viewer's experience of the film, the simulation theory of emotions provides the most thorough account of the viewers' mental capacities being engaged internal to the film's contents. It satisfies all three conditions I outlined at the beginning of this chapter. The internal engagement required of simulation is important to our understanding of the audience's immersion and temporal experience. As I will explore in the next chapter, a theory of emotional identification should recognize the significance of temporal elements on the audience's experience. In the next chapter, I will more closely examine the relationship between emotions and temporal perception. Focusing on felt duration, I will build a map of the relationship between the emotional and temporal experience of the characters and the audience through simulation and immersion.

II. TIME AND EMOTIONS WITH NARRATIVES

Gaut identifies four main ways in which the medium of film can engage audiences: its photographic nature, the apparentness of movement, the temporal properties, and the sound.³⁹ Although each of these are influential and contribute to the engaging effect of films, I will primarily focus on his account of temporal properties, with the aim of expanding upon it. Gaut provides an account of the important temporal elements of cinema: story time, plot time, viewing time, order, and work time. Story time is “the entire stretch of the time in which the events recounted occurred.”⁴⁰ Within the film’s world, the span from the story’s first chronological event to the last chronological event, regardless of their placement within the movie, make up the story time.⁴¹ Plot time is similar to story time with the additional qualifier of the order in which temporal periods of the story occur and happen. Viewing time is “the length of time that the viewer, in order to experience the work, needs to take to view it.”⁴² Viewing order is “the temporal order in which she views the work” (this is more applicable to the order in which the viewer has seen parts of the work, or like the order in which the viewer watches episodes of a show). Work time is “the length of time that a work lasts.”⁴³

Let us look at an example of a biographic film about a man who lived from 1840 to 1911.

³⁹ Gaut 247-251

⁴⁰ Gaut 250

⁴¹ An example of this would be *Eternal Sunshine of a Spotless Mind*. The story time lasts from their first meeting (although it is not shown until very late in the film) to the last event in the narrative (which follows their first meeting in the sequence of scenes).
Eternal Sunshine of a Spotless Mind, dir. Michel Gondry. Focus Features, Universal Studios, USA. 2004.

⁴² Gaut 250

⁴³ Gaut 250

The story time is about 71 years, his life span and thus timeline of the story. The movie may include a non-chronological account of his life; this would be accounted for by plot time.

Viewing time would be the same as the work time under normal conditions, but we can suppose abnormal conditions for the sake of understanding. So, the movie is two and a half hours long.

This reflects the work time. A student who needs it watched before class in one and a half hours might speed up the playing to make his viewing time around one and a half hours. On the other hand, a distracted viewer might have to pause, rewind, and re-watch parts of the movie to fully experience it, making the viewing time closer to three hours.

According to Gaut, the filmmaker's control over these concepts, especially work time, plot time, and viewing order, play a crucial role in the emotional engagement of the audience. In controlling the film's temporal elements, filmmakers can manipulate the durational quality of viewers' emotions. For instance, they can make the audience's fear and anxiety accumulate by not allowing time for these feelings to dissipate. In the discussion of the movement property of films, Gaut provides a related temporal point. He recognizes how "as shots get shorter, there is an increasing tempo of in the rhythm of the cutting, which creates a sense of excitement and anticipation in the viewer."⁴⁴ The increasing rate of shots builds the feeling of events happening faster. Feeling like more and more things are happening evokes a sense of anticipation in the audience for the final event. Upon reaching the final event in the sequence, their flustered state can be provoked and settled into the proper response. However, Gaut's temporal concepts, while important to the audience's experience of a film, are not a complete list as they leave out both the character's and the audience's felt duration.

This chapter focuses on how time perception as felt duration has a relationship with

⁴⁴ Gaut 249

emotional identification.

A. Felt Duration

Carla Merino-Rajme, when describing time perception, explicates a particular phenomenon which she calls *felt duration*. Consider two cases, a boring workday and a game night. Having a boring work day, you feel like you have been there for at least 2 hours, but it has only been 45 minutes. Having fun playing and chatting with friends, you think only a couple of hours have passed, but it has actually been five hours. These are both cases in which the perception of time passing does not align with the actual duration. There is a distinction between feeling of time passing and time passing, or in Merino-Rajme's words, "the experiencing of a quality and the quality experienced."⁴⁵ She explains,

Experience of Duration is not just a claim about duration judgements. Instead, it is the claim that we usually *experience* events as having durations and that we form corresponding judgements on the basis of these experiences. In other words, it is usually *because* we experience the event as having a certain duration that we form a judgement about its duration. I will use felt duration as a name for the experience of an event as having certain duration, the what-it's-like to experience it as lasting for a certain amount of time.⁴⁶

Felt duration is the feeling of some event as lasting a certain amount of time. The experience of the game night or the boring workday has a durational quality. It feels like time is passing; however, this feeling of time passing may not be accurate to the event's duration. For example, the feeling of two hours passing actually corresponds to only forty-five minutes of the boring workday.

⁴⁵ Merino-Rajme, Carla. "A Quantum Theory of Felt Duration." *Analytic Philosophy* 55, no. 3 (September 2014): 247

⁴⁶ Merino-Rajme 240

In order to explain felt duration, Merino-Rajme proposes the term “a quantum: the longest-lived temporal slice of a situation that is normally experienced as a ‘tightly unified’ whole.”⁴⁷ The boundaries of a quantum are defined by “the earliest and latest temporal phenomenal limits.”⁴⁸ She describes that quanta can form a series of events by thinking of how they were experienced, thus relying upon a subjective measuring and ordering. Explaining further, “the feelings of unity and temporal boundedness associated with experiencing a quantum can serve to give us a sense of the duration of different events. In this way, the quantum could serve as the unit in terms of which we experience events as having different but comparable durations.”⁴⁹ With quanta serving as units, the felt duration of long events results from a “subjective pacemaker.”⁵⁰ This pacemaker is gathers an impression of the quanta that have passed. The gathered impression can account for the discrepancy between felt duration and actual duration of an event. Even though a particular number of quanta has passed, the felt duration is only composed of the impression of that number, the noticing of some quanta passing, whilst others are not gathered into the impression. The experience of time passing, the impression of quanta, can stray from the mind-independent passage of time. How time passes independently of a person’s perception may or may not be reflected in their experience of time passing, their felt duration.

⁴⁷Merino-Rajme 246

⁴⁸ Merino-Rajme 253

⁴⁹ Merino-Rajme 254

⁵⁰ Merino-Rajme 255

B. Emotions affect Time Perception and Emotions have Duration

Many emotions can involve particular temporal elements. Consider an instance of public embarrassment. Bob is giving a speech in front of his school assembly. Even if he was not already nervous, the audience's heckles and jokes at his expense build an emotion within him. He becomes flustered and embarrassed, stammering while trying to proceed with his speech but unable to continue without feeling so discombobulated. Part of this discombobulation is the feeling of time passing slowly, like the moment of embarrassment might last forever. Every second that ticks by feels like an eternity spent fruitlessly trying to continue his speech. Every chuckle at his expense from the audience happens excruciatingly slowly, and Bob cannot stop it. Bob's embarrassment forces his sense of time passing to go askew. He feels as if time passes painfully slowly. His felt duration makes the event seem significantly longer than the couple minutes it actually lasted. His embarrassment is what made his experience what it was, with its elongated felt duration. The felt duration of a given experience is connected to the emotions involved in the event.

Positive emotional experiences can also affect temporal experience. Take, for example, Suzie's bliss of a long-awaited vacation to visit old friends. Trudging through her workdays leading up to the vacation, Suzie anticipates her trip, making her feel as if time is moving slowly. She is very excited, but the object of her excitement has yet to reach her. When it finally becomes vacation time, she feels elation. The bliss Suzie feels when vacationing with her old friends makes her feel as if time passing quickly. She wishes for it to last longer, but her happiness upon this vacation and the cheer she feels makes the moments blend together and fly by her. Before she knows it, her vacation has ended. Her happiness overcame an accurate accounting of time passing in her experience. Instead, her feeling as if time had sped up is tied to

her happiness. Her felt duration of the vacation was a short, quickly lived, three days, while the vacation actually lasted a week.

Both Bob's and Suzie's experiences demonstrate that emotions involve particular felt durations. Whether we are experiencing positive or negative emotions, our felt duration may be affected by such emotions. This affect can vary based upon the individual, the strength of the emotion, and other factors of the experience but this affect can be felt nonetheless.⁵¹ However, it is not just that emotions affect temporal perception, but that the emotion is, at least partially, characterized by the temporal experience. An emotional experience, such as the embarrassment, anticipation, or happiness seen above, is partially made up of the emotion's temporal qualities. Anticipation without the longing and slowed felt duration would not be fully anticipatory. The emotional experience is incomplete without the temporal qualities of the emotion.

In addition to emotions involving time perception, emotions have durational qualities. As seen above, a particular emotion may involve a person's experience of time as passing slowly or rapidly; however, another temporal relationship with emotions is the experience of how much time the emotion lasts. In experiencing a strong emotion, there may be the time it takes to rise within you. Once it is fully present, it is processed, and the emotion endures until it fades or is replaced with a more overwhelming one. This process takes time and has durational quality. Berys Gaut describes, "most emotions have a natural temporal profile."⁵² It takes time, lengthy or short, for emotions to well up or dissipate. Take for consideration the difference between the

⁵¹ In a psychological experiment performed by Yuki Yamada and Takahiro Kawabe, subjects experiencing emotional stimuli were asked to record time judgments. While there may be a difference between time judgments and the experience of time, the study concluded a link between negative emotional stimuli and elongated time judgments.

Yamada, Yuki, and Takahiro Kawabe. "Emotion Colors Time Perception Unconsciously." *Consciousness and Cognition* 20, no. 4 (December 2011): 1835–1841.

⁵² Gaut, 251

fear felt at a jump-scare and dread of an upcoming event. When Bob jumps out from behind a corner to scare Suzie, Suzie feels herself tense up, and the intense fear courses through her as she is startled and frightened. Even after realizing there is no threat, she still has to make an effort to get rid of the rush that she feels. Her fear lasts for a certain duration, even though she already knows it to be unfounded.⁵³ It takes her a few minutes to gather her breath and no longer feel the fear. However, Suzie's dread of her in-laws coming to visit is a long-lasting state. Rather than a spike of fear that diminishes over a relatively short period of time, the dread she feels is a steady constant flow over a more extended period. Emotions have a duration in which they are felt, and this duration can vary from emotion to emotion.

Additionally, some mental illnesses are related to particular experiences of time that may be connected to an emotional state and that state's duration. Depression often affects felt duration.⁵⁴ Sometimes when in a depressive episode, time may feel as if it is only slowly trudging forward out of its own inability to stop. Triggered by depression, a dissociative episode can make days collapse into each other. It feels as if time is lost and passing by without any particular notice. The particular experience of time passing while depressed or dissociating can vary, but there is an alteration in a person's experience to make it feel as if time is passing abnormally. This experience of time can vary with the intensity of the emotional episode and the

⁵³ There are neurochemical explanations to why her body takes time to relax and dissipate the adrenaline, but for my discussion the emotion felt is primary.

⁵⁴ Many psychological studies explore the relationship between depression and time perception; however many of these studies have inconclusive results, contradictory with one another, and are sometimes inconsistent with depressed patients' testimonials. Due to this, Thönes and Oberfeld compiled a meta-analysis of sixteen psychological studies on this topic; however, most of these studies are susceptible to the conflation of judgement and perception. Additionally, they did not account for extended depressive episodes and necessary experiential conditions when they were conducted.

Thönes, Sven, and Daniel Oberfeld. "Time Perception in Depression: A Meta-Analysis." *Journal of Affective Disorders* 175 (2015): 359–372.

length of it. People with anxiety may also feel alteration to their sense of time passing. When anxiously trying to fill in answers on a big test, a student may feel as if everything is happening at once and that there is not enough time. Their felt duration of that experience is shorter than the actual time given to take the exam. It feels as if time is passing too quickly. Felt duration and emotions are closely related.

C. Felt Duration in the Experience of Films

A film's narrative can follow a character or multiple characters. As an audience, we see their story and their emotions unfold over the plot time during our viewing time. Introducing felt duration into the schema of temporal elements allows us to better account for the full experience of the character and of the viewer.

a. Felt Duration as Depicted in Narrative Film Characters

In story time, a character may have a period in which their feeling of time passing is not aligned with the passing of story time. What may be one night in story time may have felt like a blink of an eye to the character. This is not to say that felt duration cannot be depicted in a film, only that Gaut's concept of story time does not capture this temporal element. Through my following analyses, I will build evidence to show that the depiction of characters' felt duration can elucidate and elaborate on their experience of emotions.

A film may depict a character's felt duration through many means, all of which provide a greater understanding of that character and their situation. Here I will look at four techniques (although there may be plenty more) used to show a character's felt duration: slow-motion, fast-motion, frame speed, and jump-cuts.

The most explicit technique films use to depict felt duration are slow motion scenes.

Some slow-motion scenes are purely for stylistic effect — for instance, to have a visually abnormal shot like many of the slow-motions scenes in Zach Snyder's *300*.⁵⁵ The use of slow-motion for a purely stylistic effect is done for the audience's experience of the scene, rather than to depict the character's experience of events. It is used to show something visually striking or important, but not to display a particular character's experience. Other slow-motion scenes allow the audience to experience time as the character does. There are overt examples of this with characters like Neo from *The Matrix*,⁵⁶ Flash and Superman from *Justice League*,⁵⁷ and Quicksilver from *X-Men: Days of Future Past*.⁵⁸ While these do depict felt duration because these characters experience time at a different rate than the average character or the audience, I am more concerned with the use of felt duration in elucidating emotional states. Depictions that just display a character's ability to process time passing at a slower rate do not necessarily make the connection between this ability and their emotional state. In these examples, the slow-motion effect is a demonstration of the character's experience of time that is unrelated to their experience of an emotion.

⁵⁵ *300*. Dir. Zach Snyder. Warner Bros. USA. 2007.

⁵⁶ *The Matrix* uses a blend of slow and fast motion to display character's skills. These skills are the result of their perception of the world inside the Matrix and their understanding of time within it. The rooftop scene in which Neo dodges bullets shows his experience of time. He experiences the bullets coming toward him at a slowed rate and this allows him to dodge them a bit. Unlike some other instances of slow-motion in *The Matrix* in which it used stylistically, this scene and ones later in the series confirm that Neo is capable of experiencing of time at a slowed rate.

The Matrix. Dir. Lana Wachowski and Lilly Wachowski. Warner Bros. USA. 1999.

⁵⁷ During a battle scene, while everything is in slow motion, the Flash and Superman experience time passing at a slowed rate due to their ability to move extremely fast. When fighting the objects and people around them move slowly while they continue at normal speed.

Justice League. Dir. Zach Snyder. Warner Bros, DC Entertainment, USA. 2017.

⁵⁸ Quicksilver is able to move extremely fast resulting in a slowed sense of time. In the kitchen scene, he is able to move objects and people around as they seem to be moving incredibly slowly through time.

X-Men: Days of Future Past. Dir. Bryan Singer. Twentieth Century Fox, Marvel Entertainment. 2014.

In contrast, some slow-motion scenes depicting felt duration are used to understand and emphasize the weight and effect of how the character feels through exposing their temporal perception. For example, Bong Joon-Ho's *Snowpiercer*⁵⁹ uses slow-motion scenes for multiple different purposes. There are sequences in which the slow-motion is used primarily for stylistic effect, but a few of them depict felt duration of an emotional state. During a fight scene, the main character, Curtis, is depicted as slowly fighting his way forward, ignoring his allies being slaughtered beside and behind him. He cuts down one man and spends the time to ax him two additional times as his comrade is killed right behind him. He takes no heed and just continues slowly moving forward, even when his ally Edgar saves his life. Time feels like it is moving slowly, and each step is hard-fought; Curtis continues to trudge forward. By providing the audience with insight into Curtis's evaluative states and emotions, the slowed felt duration depicted in the scene shows the audience the depth of Curtis's determination and fixation to go forward. Curtis experiences the fight as a slow grueling battle forward without valuing or even being aware of his allies. It also displays that he lacks attachment to his allies and is solely focused on his goal. This state of Curtis's mentality is later confirmed when he allows Edgar to be killed.

However, it is important to note that during Edgar's death, time also slows to show the hesitation from the emotional turmoil felt by Curtis. Curtis stops moving forward and slowly turns to look back at Edgar being held at knifepoint and then forward at the high official trying to get through the next door. Curtis's slowed felt duration is present to show his internal conflict and experience of his emotional states and processing. What distinguishes this scene from the others in which the slow-motion shots are to give the audience more time or information is how

⁵⁹ *Snowpiercer*, dir. by Bong Joon-ho. Moho films, Opus Pictures, South Korea. 2013.

the slow-motion is used in conjunction with other technical aspects to signal that the focus is on the mental state of the character. This scene uses framing with close up shots of Curtis until after his decision where it switches back to wider shots for the action, and the sound editing mutes the sounds of fighting and shouting in favor of the score for a more internal and emotional effect. His determination to move forward regardless of anyone is felt when he decides and slowly moves forward and doesn't stop even when Edgar cries out from being stabbed. The depiction of his felt duration in that moment allows the audience to understand the extent of his intense emotional experience, as well as Curtis's mournful determination as he continues forward even as Edgar dies. The slow-motion sequences depicting Curtis's felt duration illuminate his emotional experience for the audience.

For the opposite of slow motion, fast-motion can also be used to display felt duration. Fast-motion is the depiction of some action at an accelerated speed. On a surface level, it can show a character's experience of time like the time-traveling scene in *Lucy*. However, it can also show a character's felt duration in order to emphasize the mental and emotional state. For example, in *Requiem for a Dream*⁶⁰, fast-motion depicts the characters' experiences under the influence of drugs and withdrawal from the drugs. One narrative goal for the film is to depict the experience of these characters whose lives are becoming consumed by their relationship with drugs. Under withdrawal from a depressant like heroin or feeling the rush under a stimulant like amphetamines, the characters' emotional and mental states are altered; this is depicted through fast-motion, through making their altered experience of time more explicit to the audience. Their frantic and blissed states are often cued to the audience by showing the character's experience as sped up, with time and tasks passing by the character without much impact on their story as a

⁶⁰ *Requiem for a Dream*. Dir. Darren Aronofsky. Artisan Entertainment, Thousand Words, USA. 2000.

whole. The narrative focuses on the experience of what it means to be these characters, and part of what it means to be them is to understand the states in which time passes without much notice by them. Their felt duration of these states is much shorter than the story time in which those events could occur. Their drug-related emotional states are elucidated by the depiction of the character's felt duration.

Another technique is the use of frame speed (although this can be how slow-motion or fast-motion is achieved). Frame speed refers to how many still shots make up the illusion of motion in a film over time. It is typically measured in frames per second (fps). In modern films, there is also the additional choice of motion-blurring, in which the frames are blurred to make movement seem more smooth. An interesting use of frame rate and rejection of motion blurring technology is done by *Spider-man: Into the Spideverse*.⁶¹ The fps is manipulated in the film to depict the different states of the main character, Miles. While most modern animated features run at 24 fps, the creators of *Spider-man: Into the Spideverse* choose to have Miles run at 12 fps for some parts of the movie.⁶² This makes Miles seem clunkier and more disoriented than the world around him, especially since they did not use motion blurring. This clunkiness and disorientation reflect his mental states during those parts of the film, in which he seems unable to keep up with his environment and events. Throughout the film we see Miles at 12fps in the same scene as characters running at 24fps. While this alone is a cunning animation technique, it also establishes the kind of experience Miles is undergoing. Due to this frame rate discrepancy, Miles is depicted as out of sync with the world and others around him. His experience, including his temporal

⁶¹ *Spider-man: Into the Spideverse*. Dir. Bob Persichetti, Peter Ramsey, Rodney Rothman. Sony Pictures Entertainment, Marvel Entertainment, USA. 2018.

⁶² "How Animators Created the Spider-Verse | Wired" *Wired*, YouTube Video. March 22, 2019. < https://youtu.be/l-wUKu_V2Lk>

experience, is disjointed from the world around him. This experience is prominent in the sequence of shots depicting his day at school in the first few minutes of the film. Events keep happening faster, and Miles is represented as feeling as if time is passing quickly. Miles's frame rate depicts how out-of-sync he is with his environment and how he experiences time passing by him rapidly. Miles's mental experience and felt duration are depicted through his frame rate as he is unable to sync up with his surroundings and experience them at the same rate as others.

Miles's sequence in the school also makes use of jump-cuts. A jump-cut is a quick cut from one moment to the next, splicing away story time in order to only display the important information in a scene. It often makes the passage of story time seem condensed. While it can just be used to save viewing time for more crucial scenes, it can also be used to depict a character's felt duration. This can then extend into providing a crucial aspect of the character's experience of emotions. In *Spider-Man: Into the Spideverse*, the fast cutting between hallway, locker, and classrooms makes it feel like time is flying by, while an increasingly distressed Miles tries and fails to keep up (as seen in him showing up late to class). This depiction of time flying past Miles makes the audience aware of how Miles experiences the school day and his overwhelmed emotional state. Later in the movie, as Miles grows into being Spider-man, his frame rate increases to match the others at 24fps, subtly cueing to the audience that Miles no longer feels distressingly disoriented and out of sync with his world. He no longer feels as if the world is passing him by, and he is unable to catch up. The manipulation of frame speed and the jump-cuts are vital ways to depict Miles's mental and emotional experience.

Another example of jump-cuts used to display the character's emotional state is Richie's cutting scene from Wes Anderson's *The Royal Tenenbaums*.⁶³ In a bathroom, Richie cuts off all

⁶³ *The Royal Tenenbaums*. Dir. Wes Anderson. Touchstone Pictures, American Empirical Pictures, USA. 2001.

of his hair to a jagged buzzcut and trims his beard to stubble. Throughout, the scene contains many subtle jump-cuts starting with the removal of his sweatbands. The jump-cuts in this scene often cut off the end of an action to jump right into the next action (from cutting one chunk of hair to immediately cutting another). This gives the audience a sense of Richie's state of mind. He seems almost in a trance, seemingly emotionlessly cutting and trimming his look away. Time for Richie is moving in a daze; he has disassociated from it passing as he goes about his actions. He cuts one chunk of hair and, before processing, he is immediately cutting the next chunk. This daze he seems to be under signals to the audience an emotional break of some sort — he is so deeply consumed in an emotion that he seems distant from his bodily actions and state of being. Richie's felt duration excludes lost bits of time, as he is only aware of the briefest moments of actions as he transforms his appearance. He is no longer experiencing time as cohesively flowing but instead as a sporadic element of his emotion-fueled experience. His overwhelming emotions put him in a haze that blinds him to time passing, thus making his experience of time sporadic and non-cohesive. This depiction of Richie's felt duration is crucial for the audience to understand the deep depression and dissociative state by which Richie is consumed. The jump-cuts allow the audience to understand Richie's felt duration and, thus, provide a more thorough understanding of his mental and emotional experience.

b. Felt Duration of the Audience

As we have seen, there are many ways filmmakers may display the felt duration of the character; now, we will turn to the techniques used to manipulate the audience's felt duration and how this may affect their emotional experience. This discussion will support a connection made in the final section of the chapter in which temporal immersion can contribute to the audience's emotional engagement.

For a film to manipulate the audience's felt duration, the audience must be temporally immersed. The audience's temporal immersion and, thus, their felt duration of a film can be affected by many aspects of their environment, their mindset entering the film, and the film itself; however, only the last of these aspects can be controlled across audiences. Within the film itself, the film's pacing provides a crucial way for filmmakers to craft their audience's experience, including their temporal immersion. The pacing of the film is a term for how the film flows over time. The pacing is made up of the order, duration, and speed of the narrative events.

Consider the difference between the long lulling of a spy-thriller where events and information unfold slowly and the quick rush of an action movie in which events unfold rapidly. The pacing builds the rhythm and tempo of the narrative for a feeling of progression in a particular way. Pacing elements generate the experience of the narrative and emotions subsiding and growing in a curated relationship. A narrative may progress slowly or rapidly while emotions may rise or diminish throughout. The narrative progression and the presence and intensity of emotions can play into one another. How emotions and narratives progress and their interconnected relationship is curated by pacing elements.

While pacing has a temporal base, it is not the same as the audience's felt duration. For some films, the pacing can align with the audience's felt duration. The audience feels like time speeds up during action sequences in which many events are happening; the pacing is sped up, and so is the audience's felt duration. However, sometimes the pacing and the audience's felt duration do not align. Some action scenes can make the audience feel as if time is going excruciatingly slowly because they know something the protagonist might not know. In this case, the pacing is sped up, but the audience's felt duration is slowed. Or, taking another example, a slow-motion scene might break from normal pacing into a slowed version, but the audience's felt

duration may remain steady, or even speed up, due to the information and detail given in the slowed scene. It is also the case that pacing techniques can be executed poorly or be used to force the viewer out of temporal immersion. Some pacing elements can force the audience out of immersion within a film and remind them that they are just observers. Although there are many other factors of films that can influence an audience member's engagement with and immersion in the film, pacing contributes a significant effect. Through pacing elements, the audience's immersion in and engagement with the film can be manipulated to alter the audience's felt duration and emotional engagement with characters. In this section, I will explore how the audience's felt duration is affected by the films' pacing and, in turn, how this affects emotional engagement. The pacing of the film can be established by multiple techniques, but I will focus on music and crosscutting.

First, music is a major factor in how the audience experiences the pacing of a film. Music has a temporal nature in how it unfolds through time and has a duration. For example, Howard Shore's score to the sequence surrounding the Gandalf's fall in *The Lord of the Rings: The Fellowship of the Ring* consists of a transition from short hard notes to long, drawn-out, soft notes.⁶⁴ The banging drums and deep brass precede Gandalf's fall. As Gandalf falls, the pacing switches from a rushed and fast feel to elongated and slow. The song makes time seem to slow. The switch from the brass and drums to softer and longer notes is also elongated. The audio that should be aligned with the visuals is slowly distorted, muted, and faded until the only audio is the song. The sounds of the rushed steps, voices, and arrows fade away. There is a sense of building up as the score becomes more prominent, and the audio matching the visuals fades. The

⁶⁴ *The Lord of the Rings: The Fellowship of the Ring*. Dir. Peter Jackson. Music by Howard Shore. New Line Cinema, Wingnut Films, USA. 2001.

characters weeping has no corresponding sound but the score. While the visuals do go into slow motion briefly after Gandalf's fall during the score's transition, the fading audio and the softer notes have a more extended effect on the audience's experience. The score manipulates the audience's felt duration from quick and rushed to a slowed sense of time passing. The slowed felt duration steeps the audience in the scene. It feels like a harsh abruptness when Aragon speaks over the music to urge the rest of the fellowship forward; the audience feels a harsh abruptness to the score being superseded. The music, while manipulating the audience's felt duration, also conveys the deep sorrow. The slowed felt duration steeps the audience in the sorrow. The music brings the audience into the experience felt by the characters making them linger in the immense sorrow along with the characters. The music evokes a particular temporal experience in the audience that more thoroughly simulates the characters' emotional and temporal experiences. Emotional identification with the characters is generated through the music's effect on the audience's felt duration. This works in the opposite direction to the techniques discussed earlier; they work from depicting the character's felt duration to promote the audience's understanding of the character's emotional experience. Here, music as a pacing technique works in the manipulation of the audience's felt duration to prompt them into identification with the character's experience.

Another technique that contributes to a film's pacing is crosscutting, also called parallel editing. Crosscutting is when two sequences are cut and interspersed with one another, often giving the illusion that the sequences are related in some time, manner, or place. Some examples include *Inception*'s hallway scene and *The Silence of the Lambs*'s raid of the wrong house. *The Silence of the Lambs*'s crosscutting scene cuts between the "Buffalo Bill" character inside his

house and the FBI setting up outside a house preparing to storm it.⁶⁵ The rapid cutting between the shots of the inside of Bill's house and the FBI outside builds up a growing feeling of intensity and anxiety. It all comes to a peak when the FBI man rings the doorbell, and the bell rings inside the killer's house. Only upon Bill answering his door is it revealed that the protagonist, Clarice, is there and the FBI is at the wrong house.

One of the reasons this scene is so captivating is that it leads the audience down a series of assumptions about the FBI being outside the killer's house, while the growing stress in both places adds to the tension surrounding the possible collision between the FBI and the killer. This expectation and anticipatory feeling can alter the audience's felt duration to feel as if time is passing at an increasing rate. This expectation-fueled illusion is shattered when Buffalo Bill opens his door to reveal Clarice and not the FBI agent ringing the doorbell. The audience members experience this buildup of emotions filled with expectations, tension, and furor only to feel time slow immensely while being taken over by the utter dread and horror upon realizing that the FBI is in the wrong place and Clarice is alone with the killer. This scene slows the film's pacing and the felt duration of the audience members through its manipulation of brief cuts and strong emotions. The intrigue and potential for this moment to be the climactic moment the FBI catches Buffalo Bill can dominate the hopes and attention of the audience. Being wrapped up in the intrigue and expectation, the audience experiences a felt slowing when Clarice is revealed to be behind the door and not the FBI, because their expectation is subverted in a horrifying way and their hopes come crashing to a halt. The film continues the crosscutting for a bit longer allowing the tension and anxiety to culminate even more. The jarring aspect of this crosscut upon the reveal serves to drive stronger emotions and further intrigue in the audience members, rather

⁶⁵ *The Silence of the Lambs*, dir. Jonathan Demme. Strong Hart/Demme Production, Orion Pictures, USA. 1991.

than jolt them back into awareness of themselves. The audience, teased with the expectation of the FBI capturing Buffalo Bill, is vaulted into an intense concern for Clarice upon the halting climax. In subverting the expectation, the narrative does not relieve the audience's intense buildup of emotions or the stressed rapidity of their felt duration. Instead the subversion of the audience's expectations drastically slows the audience's felt duration and forces the transformation of the intense build up into an intense prolonged horror. The audience is driven into intense emotional engagement with Clarice. Capturing viewers' attention and minds through crosscutting allows films to manipulate the audience's felt duration and promote particular emotional responses.

D. The Relationship between Emotional Identification and Felt Duration

In this section, I will establish the connections between a character's felt duration, the audience's emotional identification, emotional immersion, and temporal immersion. These connections are not necessarily experienced as a strict causal chain dependent upon felt duration. I am merely presenting the flow of events this way for clarity and to draw attention to an often-overlooked feature that can be experienced, felt duration.

First, the depiction of a character's felt duration facilitates emotional identification with the character through a simulation-type mechanism. When using simulation mechanisms to emotionally identify with a character, the viewer is trying to bridge the gap between their mental state and the characters' by adapting new information given about the character, such as their mental state, their history, the situation, the characters around them, and world in which their narrative resides. Providing a depiction of a character's felt duration allows the audience one more aspect to factor into this adaptation to understand the character and bridge the gap. Being

given subjective access to the character's experience through depictions of felt duration allows a more careful and thorough simulation of what it means to be the character and have their experience. Felt duration, in particular, aids in understanding the experience of the character and what it means to be them in that situation, having those emotions. Felt duration elucidates the potency and nuances of an emotional experience. In understanding the characters' emotional experiences more clearly, the audience can adapt it into their simulation, which brings the audiences' mental and emotional states closer to the characters'. Emotional experiences have a temporal nature, and this nature can be expressed in depictions of felt duration. Using felt duration to elucidate an emotional experience adds more depth of understanding and more emphasis on the potency of the character's emotion and own experience of their mental state. Additionally, the depiction of a character's felt duration often subjects the audience to the particular temporal experience, thus lessening the gap, or the differences, between the character and audience.

Emotional identification sustains deep emotional immersion. As discussed in the previous chapter, emotional immersion occurs when the audience member's emotional reaction is absorbed in the film. The audience's emotions are only concerned with the film. Emotional immersion can be fueled solely by emotional engagement without identification; however, deep immersion is only reached when the audience loses awareness of themselves as viewers, which is most often achieved through emotional identification. Emotional identification allows the audience's emotional capacities to be focused internally to the film instead externally with the acknowledgment of oneself as the viewer. Without placing oneself within the film and losing awareness of one's own situation and reality in favor of the character and the narrative, the audience cannot sustain a level of deep emotional investment and immersion. Depictions of the

character's felt duration allow for a more in-depth simulation bridging the gap between the audiences' and the characters' emotional states. Because the depiction of felt duration allows for a more thorough understanding of the character's experience, the simulation of it allows for a more intensive immersion. The audience has less to assume or leave blank about what the experience is like for the character. Providing a fuller understanding of the character's experience allows for a greater loss of self into the simulation of the character and, thus, a deeper emotional immersion. There is less of the audience's experience shading the character's experience because the film, and in particular the depiction of felt duration, is providing the character's experience more completely.

Emotional immersion can be a crucial factor in achieving temporal immersion. Being emotionally absorbed into a film to the extent that one loses awareness of oneself as a viewer contributes to the dependency on the film for temporal perception. Simulating the characters' emotional experiences as they experience them with temporal elements guides the audience into being temporally immersed. Becoming so emotionally immersed creates a situation in which the film provides the passage of time rather than external factors. There is a lack awareness of oneself as a viewer and, as a result, all emotional and mental attitudes are concerned with the film. The temporal nature of the character's emotions, mental states, and events provide indicators of the passage of time for the emotionally immersed audience. Emotional simulation, constituted in part by imagining the character's felt duration, can manipulate the audience's felt duration. By simulating a particular temporal experience of a character, the viewer imagines themselves to have such temporal experience. Taking on the temporal experience of the character in the simulation not only elucidates the character's experience more thoroughly, but it brings the audience into a particular temporal experience in the immersion.

Having reached temporal immersion, a feedback loop can be cultivated by a film. Temporal immersion can involve manipulation of the audience's felt duration to elicit certain emotional engagement. As demonstrated in the section regarding the audience's felt duration and pacing elements, particular manipulations on an audience's felt duration can result in emotional engagement and identification with the narrative and characters. Pacing elements that target the audience's emotional and temporal experience often manipulate the audiences' felt duration to make them feel certain emotions and connections to the characters. The pacing elements manipulate the audience's felt duration to evoke particular emotions that align the audience with the character's emotional state (the score from *The Fellowship of the Ring*) or encourage emotional engagement with the characters more generally (the crosscutting in *The Silence of the Lambs*). The audience's felt duration can lead them back into emotional engagement with the film and its characters because the experience of time and emotions are often intertwined.

III. REVIEW AND IMPLICATIONS

When watching a film, the viewer can have complex emotional and temporal experiences. In chapter one, I built a framework of how we might understand these experiences through engagement and immersion. An audience member's emotional engagement with a film is characterized by their attitudes and emotions directed at a film and their emotional identification with characters. The audience can be emotionally engaged in having attitudes directed at the film from an external stance. Moving the emotional capacities of the audience to be internal to the characters and narrative provides emotional identification, a subtype of emotional engagement. Emotional identification is the process in which audience members come to understand and share emotions with the character.

While many theories have provided ways to understand emotional identification, a satisfactory theory provides an explanation that: (1) is grounded in how we relate to others, (2) is not reliant upon reflective inferential processes, and (3) explains why particular viewers identify with certain characters while others do not.

(1) An account of emotional identification should be grounded in our relations with others. A theory that encapsulates both kinds of identification, with characters and people, provides a more complete account for human capacity to empathize. As such, it is more parsimonious for a theory of identification to cover both relations with characters and actual people. The burden of proof is on theories that suppose that there is no overlap between the way we relate to characters and how we relate to other people. (2) An account of emotional identification should not rely on a reflective inferential process to understand the character (like "theory theory" relies upon reflective reasoning based on beliefs about a character). There is an

immediacy and closeness needed to achieve the level of engagement and immersion I am discussing. A reflective and inferential understanding, in contrast, only provides a way to treat the character as if they are a sophisticated robot. According to this view, instead of using our own minds and experiences to lay the framework, there is an assumption that other minds are more different than similar to our own, and thus we must reason through reflective inferences on how others' minds might work. (3) An account of emotional identification also should possess the ability to explain the common occurrence of variation amongst which audience members identify with particular varying characters.

These criteria are just the basic foundation for a satisfactory theory. Building on this, my account provides reasons to recognize the importance of felt duration in emotional identification. In acknowledging felt duration's significance in emotional identification, theories can provide a more satisfactory and thorough account of the audience's experience. The theory I have built in this thesis also demonstrates how felt duration can be paramount to satisfying the above conditions.

Although Gaut's and Smith's theories have some of these qualities, the simulation theory of emotions provides the most thorough basis for these crucial aspects. Providing a theory based on how people understand others, it claims that people imagine themselves to have the other person's position, beliefs, and emotions in order to simulate the experience of what it means to be them. This satisfies condition (1). Simulation theory satisfies condition (2) by the audience using their own faculties as a basis instead of reasoning through reflective inferences about how the other's mind and emotions might work. While it does not explicitly address the variation in identification, the theory does provide the space to do so. Observers run a simulation using their own faculties to imagine themselves in the other's position, or to hold the character's mental

states, emotions, and beliefs as one's own. When a character's traits are already held by the viewer, the viewer can use their own trait and faculties in their simulation to understand the character. There are fewer foreign traits for the viewer to simulate. Additionally, adapting Smith's 'structure of sympathy' into simulation, as described in the last section of chapter one, can provide a framework for the variance amongst identification through simulation. Whether or not a character is recognized as an agent, the access given to the character and their states, and the character's values and morals can all provide reasons for why some characters are more relatable than others to certain viewers simulating their experience. The 'structure of sympathy' on its own cannot provide the same level of immersion without simulation. Thus, simulation theory can accommodate explanations required to meet condition (3).

Another part of the audience's experience of a film is their immersion into the film. Immersion is characterized by the audience's mind being occupied by the film's reality and narrative, and their lack of awareness of their own reality. There are two subtypes of immersion that are central to my discussion: emotional and temporal. Emotional immersion is achieved when the film wholly preoccupies the audiences' emotions, and the audience loses awareness and focus on anything else. Emotional identification often generates a deeper level of emotional immersion because, by definition, the emotions of the audience are internal to the film's world and narrative in a case of emotional identification. In these cases, the audience is so engaged in the simulation that they lose awareness of themselves as the audience; all their emotional states become internal to the film's content through the intensity of simulation.

Temporal immersion occurs when the audience's sense of time is controlled by the film. The audience loses awareness of time passing external to the film and becomes dependent upon the film for the indicators of time passing. Sometimes, films will manipulate the audience's felt

duration (their experience of time passing) to force them out of immersion or into deeper immersion. However, in order to do so, the audience must already be reliant upon the film for their sense of time passing. In addition, emotional immersion can contribute to temporal immersion. Losing awareness of themselves as viewers, the audience's minds lose focus on their external passage of time; thus, they become reliant upon the thing that occupies their mind's focus for the sense of time passing: the film. Of course, there can be variance and fluctuation amongst the levels and types of both engagement and immersion.

An often overlooked but significant factor of the audience's emotional identification and immersion is felt duration. In chapter two, I discuss how felt duration relates to the emotional features of audience experience when engaging with a film. Felt duration is the experience of the passage of time. For a given event, there is a feeling of time passing as it is experienced. According to Merino-Rajme, felt duration is the result of a gathered impression of unified temporal slices. Our emotional experiences involve particular temporal features and have durational quality. Felt duration helps account for an important element of how we experience emotions. Examples of this given previously were: embarrassment in public speaking with the feeling of time moving slowly, happiness during a vacation with the feeling like time is passing quickly, disassociation during depression and feeling as if time is lost and passing without notice, and anxiety with the feeling that there is not enough time and it is passing too quickly. Felt duration can be a crucial factor in achieving emotional identification and the two types of immersion discussed above.

First, it facilitates emotional identification. In films, depictions of felt duration elucidate the emotional experiences of the characters. By incorporating a more complete understanding of the characters' experiences into their simulation, the audience can more easily emotionally

identify with the characters. This bridges the gap between their mental states and those of the characters. Second, the ease of emotional identification aids the viewers in being emotionally immersed because their minds become occupied with the simulation and slip into focusing on the film. The audience's capacities are focused internally to the narrative and characters, losing awareness of themselves as viewers. Third, being emotionally immersed contributes to the viewers becoming dependent on events and actions in the narrative to signify the passage of time, (i.e., temporally immersion). Fourth, if an audience member is temporally immersed, their felt duration can be manipulated by the film to elicit particular responses. These elicited responses often further the emotional engagement and identification of the audience. The characters' and the audience's felt duration facilitate the audience's emotional engagement and both types of immersion.

A. Aesthetic Value

Because it has already been argued a significant number of times and is widely recognized by most film theorists, I assume that the emotional engagement of the audience is vital to the experience and value of a film.⁶⁶ Emotional engagement is crucial when interacting with a film; without any emotional engagement, the interaction is purely based upon the intake of information without any evaluation of such information. For example, in *The Lives of Others* (*Das Leben der Anderen*) the audience needs not only to have some general emotional engagement but must, to some extent, emotionally identify with Gerd Wiesler in order to understand the narrative.⁶⁷ First, knowing information about the character without any emotions

⁶⁶ Berys Gaut wrote, "the emotional power of cinema is central to its appeal and value as an art form" (244)

directed at such information is insufficient for fully understanding his position in the narrative. Knowing that he is a Stasi officer positioned to spy on the artist couple gives the audience information. However, without emotional responses, the audience would accept these facts about his character without the additional understanding that comes from evaluating this information and having an emotional response to it. Having an attitude directed at the Wiesler regarding the information given about his employment allows a more invested understanding of his morally dubious position. The audience has an internal feeling directed at the character, which goes beyond a neutral acceptance of information.

Films can frame information to guide the audience to make particular judgments and have certain attitudes towards characters, scenes, and narrative points. Often these framings require the audience to go beyond a beliefs based in reflective inferential processes and instead assimilate how things are represented and what emotions these representations evoke. The audience goes beyond just accepting the presented information, to investing in the information by having some emotional response to it. When refusing the film's framing, and refusing to have emotional responses, parts of the narrative experience are forfeited by the viewer. There is a difference in the experience of the narrative without any emotional responses.

Second, without understanding the characters' emotional and evaluative states, the audience cannot understand much of the narrative. Understanding Wiesler's emotional states and motivations through emotional identification helps the audience to understand Wiesler's actions and put them into context. Without this understanding, the narrative and character's actions would seem increasingly bizarre to the audience as his actions contradict his explicitly given

⁶⁷ *The Lives of Others (Das Leben der Anderen)* dir. Florian Henckel von Donnersmarck. Wiedemann & Berg Filmproduktion, Germany. 2006.

duties. Emotional identification allows the audience to understand his emotional and evaluative states, what he thinks about his work and the people he observes. When listening to the artists in their apartment, many emotions are evoked within Wiesler, but this information is not given explicitly (i.e., through statements or reports on his emotions like “I feel sad” or “I feel lonely”). The audience’s understanding of his emotions is achieved through emotional simulation, which allows them to understand his emotions as he increasingly becomes less aligned with his role as a Stasi officer. Without emotional identification, the narrative would be significantly diminished and considered incoherent in many ways. If Wiesler’s emotions and evaluative states were explicitly given to the audience, there would be a significant difference in the audience’s experience and understanding of the film and narrative. Namely, it would lack the internalization and processing of these states as one’s own through simulation. Emotional identification allows the audience to understand the character’s mental states, interactions with other characters and their environment, and their position within the narrative. In order to fully understand narratives, there needs to be an understanding of the information within its evaluative and emotional context.

Depictions of felt duration contribute to emotional identification and this understanding. The audience’s felt duration also impacts their emotional engagement with the film and, thus, their understanding and experience of the narrative. The minimum level of engagement for an aesthetic understanding of a narrative film is emotional engagement, which is significantly augmented by emotional identification. Since emotional identification plays a significant role in understanding the characters that drive the narrative, the experience of a film would be incomplete without emotional identification. Considering the influential role felt duration can play in emotional identification, it is valuable to the audience’s understanding and experience of

the narrative. My account draws attention to this often overlooked but valuable element in audience's experiences of films.

B. Ethical Value

In addition to aesthetic value, what I have established in this thesis has a number of ethical implications. The simulation theory of emotions is not just an aesthetic theory of emotional identification — it is rooted in and originated as a theory to explain how we relate to and understand one another by using our own emotional faculties. When trying to understand someone else's motivations, emotions, and mentality, people take in the information they have about that person and their situation and simulate what it is like to be in that position. The understanding they gain from this is the basis for how they relate to the other person. Considering the case of giving advice to a friend, Robert Gordon asserts, “typically, when we set ourselves up to give advice, we imaginatively project ourselves into the person's problem situation.”⁶⁸ We try to understand their beliefs, emotions, and evaluative states by simulating being in the friend's situation. The advice is often rooted in this understanding. How people interact and relate to others is dependent upon the simulation of others' minds.

Films' use of the same simulation mechanism to have the audience understand characters provides a way to broaden our emotional understanding of other people. Films present a way to explore the possibilities of how different people with different mentalities might experience emotions and how this interacts with their story. This adds to the audience's collection of how varying factors might interact with a person's emotions. These can be applied externally to fictional settings, as they are rooted in the understanding that comes from simulation. Simulation

⁶⁸ Gordon, 740

is rooted in how there are enough similarities in peoples' emotional faculties that understanding can be built without a complete rebuild of another's mind through reflective and inferential processes. The similarities and associations audiences take from films can be brought into application in simulating other people.⁶⁹ Emotionally identifying with characters is a way to contribute to how we understand other people.

A character's felt duration contributes to the audience's emotional identification through simulation. Understanding the temporal aspects of emotional experiences aids in our understanding of characters' experiences. In films, depicting felt duration provides insight into emotional experiences. The audience is given subjective access to the character's mentality in a way that is unachievable with real people. However, in providing such understanding of the temporal dimensions of emotional experiences, films allow us to incorporate such understanding into our simulations of other people. Others may have particular temporal experiences differing from our own, and recognizing this can help us to better understand them and their experience. Simulating how someone might feel and their experience of time can contribute to a better understanding of them, their situation, and the reasons behind their actions. In understanding a person and their experience more thoroughly, our evaluative states may adjust in reflection of this understanding. These evaluative states may serve as the foundation of the treatment of the other person.

On this basis, an argument can be made that the representation of a character's felt

⁶⁹ "Narrative art does not necessarily serve ulterior purposes like moral education. Nevertheless, this does not preclude that there may be moral learning with respect to narrative artworks. For in many instances the moral learning issues from following the narrative, in a non-accidental fashion, but rather like a regularly recurring side reaction, as the author seeks to absorb readers of the narrative by addressing, exercising and sometimes deepening our moral understandings and emotions."

Carroll, Noël. "Moderate Moralism." *The British Journal of Aesthetics* 36, no. 3 (1996): 223–238.

By exercising our emotions and moral understandings, narratives have the ability to affect the viewers' emotions and moral understandings external to their medium.

duration can provide insight into people's mental states with vastly differing experiences, thus affecting our emotions and treatment of those people in life external to the narrative. Consider the case of a mental illness that can warp a person's felt duration. Portrayals of mental illnesses allow audience members that have never experienced such illnesses to simulate what it is like to experience them. In simulating the experience of a mentally ill character, the audience emotionally identifies with the character, including the emotional and temporal features of that illness. Through emotionally identifying with the character, the audience member can understand their experience more fully. Understanding how characters may have a warped felt duration due to mental illnesses can contribute to a better understanding and differing treatment of people with such mental illness. The depiction of experiences featuring emotions and felt duration can help us understand other people and treat them accordingly.

Many ethicists have argued and concluded that empathy and emotional understanding of others plays an important, but sometimes limited, role in moral judgments and treatments. Heidi L. Maibom establishes, "empathy or empathy-related emotions play an important role in our moral orientation toward others, be it in our moral judgment, our moral understanding, or our moral motivation."⁷⁰ Antti Kauppinen claims, "empathy may have an irreplaceable role in the development of good moral judgment after all, although it wouldn't be wise to rely on it in each individual case."⁷¹ Others like Alison E. Denham⁷² and Hannah Read⁷³ also explore the

⁷⁰ Maibom, Heidi Lene. "Introduction: (Almost) Everything You Ever Wanted to Know about Empathy" *Empathy and Morality* New York: Oxford University Press, 2014: 36.

⁷¹ Kauppinen, Antti, "Empathy and Moral Judgment" *The Routledge Handbook of Philosophy of Empathy*, edited by Heidi Maibom, Taylor & Francis Group, 2017: 225.

⁷² Denham, Alison E, "Empathy and Moral Motivation" *The Routledge Handbook of Philosophy of Empathy*, edited by Heidi Maibom, Taylor & Francis Group, 2017: 227-241.

⁷³ Read, Hannah, "A typology of empathy and its many moral forms" *Philosophy Compass*. 2019;14: e12623.

connection between emotions, empathy, and morality. In providing depictions of emotional and temporal experiences, films allow the audience to exercise their emotional capacities while broadening their emotional understanding to impact their understanding of people external to the film. In establishing the relationship between felt duration and emotions in the experience of films, my thesis provides an additional feature for future exploration in ethics.

C. Final Thoughts

In conclusion, films engage us emotionally and felt duration is crucial to our experience of them. In emotionally identifying with a character, the audience imaginatively takes on the character's position through a simulation using their own faculties. As I've argued, emotional experiences have temporal elements. When a film depicts the character's felt duration, the audience is given subjective access to the character's emotional experience. This allows for a more thorough emotional identification. Being able to identify with a character helps the audience become emotionally immersed in the film. While engaging with the film emotionally, the audience becomes less aware of themselves as viewers and, instead, becomes occupied with the film's narrative and characters. During such emotional engagement and immersion, the audience becomes dependent upon the film for their felt duration. Being temporally immersed, the audience can be manipulated by the film into further emotional engagement and immersion. Felt duration is an element in the engagement and immersion of films that is often taken for granted despite the significant influence it has on the emotional and temporal experience. These elements of the audience's experience are essential factors to the understanding of the narrative. Additionally, films allow us to exercise our emotional capacities to understand others, and felt duration is an impactful element in this understanding. The emotional and temporal elements of

films transcend their immediate experience to help people better understand themselves and others. The primary theories I used, simulation theory of emotions and felt duration, are not exclusive to the experience of films. They are influential elements in our everyday lives. However, the relationship between them is often overlooked even though they are felt and experienced together. Looking at the experience of films illuminates a portion of how emotions and felt duration can manifest even outside of aesthetic experiences.

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