
Cognitive Character Engagement and the Extended Mind in Bahram Tavakkoli's *Wandering in the Fog*

Bahareh Saeedzadeh*

Abstract

The present study has a cognitive approach to empathy and character engagement in cinema. In discussing how through empathy and engagement with real and fictional characters, we extend our minds and enhance our cognitive abilities, the present paper studies Bahram Tavakkoli's *Wandering in the Fog* (2010), to show how Andy Clark and David Chalmers's idea of the extended mind as joined with Murray Smith's tripartite model of cognitive character engagement is at work, both in real life and in film, about how we align with and empathize with other people and things in the world and extend our minds. Tavakkoli's film is thus analyzed cognitively to describe how we try to extend ourselves by engaging with our environments and other agents, real or fictional. Attempts will therefore be made to discover by studying this film as a miniature model to describe the way extended cognition can build through active externalism.

Keywords: cognitive approach, character engagement, empathy, extended mind, extended cognition, active externalism

*. PhD Candidate of Art Research, at Art University of Tehran. E-mail: bahareh_saeedzadeh@yahoo.com

Introduction to the Theoretical Framework

Cognitive aesthetics is a methodology for the study of art that relies on research in cognitive psychology and analytic philosophy. The methodology is inherently interdisciplinary for its reliance on both humanistic and scientific research done about the processes and functions of the human mind. Cognitive aesthetics is a departure from the methodologies that previously dominated studies of art (psychoanalytic, ideological, semiotic, etc.), particularly in literary and film theory. It was introduced to film studies by David Bordwell's 1982 book *Narration in the Fiction Film*, and is considered a naturalistic discipline as it discusses concepts grounded in observable evidence. Some prominent cognitivists include Murray Smith, Andy Clark, David John Chalmers, Alvin Carl Plantinga, Patrick Colm Hogan, Joseph Anderson, and in film theory mainly David Bordwell, Noël Carroll, Gregory Currie and Torben Grodal.¹

Cognitive Film Theory, Character Engagement and Extended Cognition

The study of the means by which films elicit emotion and design, through diverse cinematic means, different character types, is a major area of interest in cognitive film theory. David Bordwell introduced his cognitive approach to film

studies mainly through the 1980's with his *Narration in Fiction Film* (1982), and his articles *A Case for Cognitivism* (1989), and *A Case for Cognitivism: Further Reflections* (1990). Murray Smith, having studied under Bordwell's supervision, is a prominent cognitivist, who has dealt extensively with the concepts of character and empathy in the context of cinema. Character identification, or character "engagement," in Smith's terms², is one of the dominant means by which we become cognitively and emotionally involved in a film. Smith argues that one primary mode of engagement, that of the structure of sympathy (or rather empathy), is a tripartite process:

1. Recognition, by which the spectator constructs the character. Character recognition involves a "mimetic hypothesis" by referring to physical features, psychology and behavior of individual (human) agents derived from a correlation to those evident in real-world experience. (Smith, 1995: 82)
2. Alignment, by which spectators are placed in relation to characters visually, cognitively and epistemically. Character alignment is developed via a character or perhaps a group of characters, which are allocated the most screen time and space, and also those with which the spectator can

develop an understanding of their perspective in relation to their beliefs, motivations, feelings and desires. Therefore, a “structure of alignment” is created by the way in which the narrative knowledge of a film is filtered through a particular character specifically by the degree of “spatial attachment and subjective access”. (Smith, 1995: 188)

3. Allegiance, through which the spectators extend their sympathy and other emotions to characters on the basis of the characters’ emotional states. This depends partly on the moral evaluations spectators make about the character’s actions and personality. (Smith, 1995, 84)
4. Describing empathy as engagement with “the social world of other minds” (Smith, 2011: 99), Smith places it in the context of the theory of the “extended mind”. (ibid, 100) The “extended mind” is an idea in the field of philosophy of mind proposed by Andy Clark and David Chalmers. It holds that the mind need not end at the boundaries of skin and skull. Tools, instruments, external objects and other environmental props can under certain conditions also count as proper parts of our

minds, playing a significant role in aiding cognitive processes with the mind and the environment acting together as a “coupled system” to allow “extended cognition”. (Clark & Chalmers, 1998)

Smith discusses that “empathy is a kind of imagining...taking the form of imagining perceiving or more generally experiencing events” (Smith, 2011: 100) without [necessarily] personally engaging in them: a sort of “active externalism” “based on the active role of the environment in driving cognitive forces”. (Clark & Chalmers, 1998) According to Clark and Chalmers, through active externalism objects within the environment couple with the mind and function as parts of it, playing significant roles in aiding cognitive processes. (ibid)

As Smith puts it following Clark and Chalmers, when we empathize with another person, “we extend our mind to incorporate part of their mind.”, and thus extend our view of the world, by “co-opting the perceptual and emotive capacities of another agent.” (Smith, 2011: 108)

Putting the concept of “the extended mind” to work in the context of cinema, Andy Clark has published an article titled *Memento’s Revenge: The Extended Mind, Extended* (2010), dealing with the memory condition of the main character of Christopher Nolan’s film *Memento* (2000), who uses photographs, notes and tattoos as extensions of his mind, to aid

his impaired memory in his struggle to find out who has killed his wife.

Murray Smith's Model of Character Engagement Applied by David Bordwell

Here, David Bordwell's Cognitive Analysis of Fritz Lang's *House by the River* (1950) (available at David Bordwell's Website on Cinema, under the title of *Observation on Film Art: Alignment, Allegiance and Murder*, posted May 16th, 2011)³ is quoted summarily, as the present article follows its footsteps in applying Smith's model to the analysis of Tavakkoli's film.⁴

Dealing with the concept of "Restricted Point Of View" and being restricted to a character's *range of knowledge*, Bordwell refers to Murray Smith's book, *Engaging Characters* calling this sort of restriction to character knowledge "alignment", which has both objective and subjective sides:

- I. "Objectively, we're spatially attached to a character in the course of a scene or several scenes.
- II. Subjectively, we may get access to the character's thoughts, memories, dreams, or immediate perceptions (as with a POV shot). Spatial attachment refers to the limited *range* of our knowledge; subjective access refers to the *depth* of knowledge about the

character's inner experience." (Bordwell, 2011)

As Bordwell discusses following Smith, alignment and allegiance don't necessarily involve us with only one character in the course of a film, rather through some careful choices about staging, framing, sound, and cutting, we may align and form allegiances with different characters

Alignment, Allegiance and Empathy in *House by the River* (1950) (Summary of Bordwell's Analysis)

Giving a brief plot summary of Lang's film, Bordwell directs our attention to the character of Stephen Byrne, who commits a crime in the film. Bordwell's account allows us to *recognize* Stephen as a "badman" in the film.



According to Bordwell: Stephen, and not the other characters of the film, is shown confronting the prosecutor and



chief inspector; therefore, we're *aligned* with Stephen.

Our *alignment* with Stephen continues at the start of the next scene, where his



wife comes in to talk with him about the inspector.

Stephen follows her into her bedroom. The camera, angled along the corridor, puts us strongly with him.

As Stephen enters the bedroom, the camera continues to favor him. Stephen comes into a knees-up shot facing front, but the answering shot of his wife weeping at the window is more distant, approximating his optical point of view.

As Bordwell puts it, often filmmakers give us slightly stronger *alignment* with one character than another by framing one more closely than another. Lang repeats these camera setups several times, making Stephen more salient. *Aligned* with him, and to some extent *allied* as well, we are able to share his sense of danger. Then, Stephen comes forward and steps into a more neutral and balanced framing.

Stephen uses a nail file to smooth his nails. Although the framing is in long shot, we can see Stephen's expression clearly, and it's duplicated in the mirror. By contrast, when his wife rises indignantly



and upbraids him, her back is mostly to us.

Stephen's face is then turned away and it is no longer visible in the mirror, Stephen says casually, "You're very fond



of [my brother], aren't you?" Now we're more *aligned* with his wife, seeing more or less what she could see. As Bordwell puts it, Lang could have staged this phase of the scene to give us more information about Stephen's expression (for example, a low-angle depth shot with his face in the foreground), but the opaque shot we get is balanced by a close, clear view of the woman for the first time in the scene—another step toward *alignment* and *allegiance* with her. The turned-away shot

of Stephen also highlights his gesture of filing his nails, important in what will come next.

Cut to a medium shot of his wife's reaction. "You know that." Back to Stephen: "Are you in love with him?"

Stephen doesn't see her reaction, which confirms his guess about her feelings for his brother, but we do. More important, our *allegiance* shifts toward her too. We know that Stephen is lustful, but his wife is suppressing her fondness for his brother



for the sake of her marriage vows.

He questions her further, finally turning to her and grinning: "Don't think I haven't been aware of it." Cut back to her: "You have a filthy mind"—something we know to be true. Her moral scheme fits ours, and *sympathy* for her builds.

This wipes the smile from Stephen's face and he walks slowly toward her, the nail file extended like a knife, but also wagging jauntily in his hand.

Stephen leaves the shot but, crucially, the camera dwells on his wife, glaring after him.

The scene's final shot shows Stephen strolling down the corridor, and it ends with him smiling and slamming his door. It is a kind of symmetrical reply to the early shot of him going to her room.

This point-of-view shot anchors us with the wife, both perceptually and morally.

As to what was described, "A string of scenes restricting us to one character after another gave us a moderately unrestricted knowledge of the overall narrative. Still,



moment by moment, the director can use film technique to weight one character's reaction more than another's. We can balance those short-term reactions against our wider compass of knowledge. Our sympathies can shift as we register characters' changing awareness of their situation, however partial their awareness



may be." (Bordwell, 2011)

Bordwell continues to say that: "Smith points out throughout his book that



alignment and *allegiance* are complicated matters," and upon that Bordwell also discusses that the fluctuations of *alignment* and *allegiance* can be quite small-scale, and they often depend on niceties of directorial technique. (ibid)

In the following section of this study, we will have a close look at the techniques used for devising *alignment* and *allegiance* in *Wandering in the Fog* (2010), both written and directed by Bahram Tavakkoli.

Character Engagement in *Wandering in the Fog*

In this part of the article, Bahram Tavakkoli's *Wandering in the Fog* is analyzed with cognitive considerations, to discover the way the tripartite process of character engagement introduced by Murray Smith is doubly at work by this film to create extended cognition and an extended mind. In so doing, following the example of David Bordwell in adopting Smith's model to the analysis of Fritz Lang's *House by the River* (1950), and in view of Clark and Chalmers's idea of the "extended mind", the present study attempts to discover:

1. **A.** How the comatose character of Tavakkoli's film is *recognized* to borrow the mind and the body of a character he creates, through embodiment and cognitive extension (See: Clark, 2008: Chap 1), to put his own erased mind to work, form memories, and live through the created character.
- B.** How the spectator *recognizes* the situation and shares the twofold experience of the film in a sort of "active externalism" (Clark & Chalmers, 1998: 7) through the comatose character and by him the schizophrenic character he creates.
2. **A.** How the spectator is *aligned* with and placed in relation to the comatose character auditorily and

cognitively.

B. How the comatose character is *aligned* with his made-up schizophrenic character's mental condition psychologically and cognitively, and how the created character is *aligned* with the wanderings, the fears and the distorted clues of his creator.

3. **A.** How the spectators *empathize* with the comatose character on the basis of his physiological and emotional state (striving to escape death), struggling to form an extended mind with a made-up character.

B. How the comatose character as the observer of his own story *judges* his characters: "Amin", "Roya", "the psychologist", "the taxi driver", "people", etc., and how the characters' behavior and conditions are affected by the mental and physical state changes of their comatose creator.

C. How the spectator develops judgments about the characters in general. (*Allegiance*)

Extending the Mind by *Wandering in the Fog*

The title of the film gives us the earliest clues as to the atmosphere of the film and its narrative qualities. The film begins with the voice of a man who is later discovered to be the central character, called "Amin"

(in English: honest and reliable). It is an ironic name, as this central character, who is a character-narrator (a first person narrator whose subjective perspectives we are restricted to as the narrative of the film), is in fact *recognized* by the spectators as an unreliable narrator⁵, a comatose man fabricating his all-forgotten life story, through “identification” with the character of “Amin”⁶ that he creates in his mind, and whose state of being he assumes.⁷

From the onset, the narrator tells us that everything has been erased from his memory, and the pictures present in his mind are combinations of blue, red, and yellow (the three primary colors). It seems as if he has the pre-requisites for creating pictures in his erased mind, or Naked Mind⁸, as Clark and Chalmers call it, (Clark & Chalmers, 1998) with which he can make up what his subconscious prompts him to (Although the character is not conscious his cognitive processes are active (ibid), through auditory stimulations, for instance, as comatose patients are said to be capable of hearing.).

We are *aligned* with and restricted to this comatose character’s narrative perspectives, and through him to the perspectives and mental states and experiences of his character “Amin”.

In his quest for his own life story through the mixing of colors, the comatose character comes across a random image which reminds him of his childhood, and the girl who lived in his neighborhood.

He says that if that girl had grown up, she could have been the girl he had known. He makes up her grown-up image in his mind and calls her “Roya” (In English: Dream). Therefore the “Roya” who is introduced as Amin’s wife in the film is *recognized* to have been fabricated by his mind, and is in fact his “dream”. The first time Roya appears in the film is on the theater stage, as she is in effect a character created by Amin, his *actress*. The comatose unreliable narrator, from now on referred to as “the main character” with whom we are *allied*, is not trying to present us with matters of fact, rather he is taking us for a trip in his foggy mental state.

The main character doesn’t even remember why he fell into a coma, and says that he is fabricating the story to escape death, because he doesn’t want to “die with an empty mind”. He says that he wants to have had memories, and have known some people before he dies. He wants to have lived before the plugs are pulled. “Even an imaginary life.”

Literally, as the main character is plugged into the machines to live, and his existence is *extended* to and by those machines, we are plugged into his story through the *aligning* cable of his restricted narrative and subjective perspectives, and there again to that of Amin’s.

In the second minute of the film, at the sight of the amputated finger, the spectator may relate it to the accident that

left “Amin” in a coma, and make some guesses in that regard.

Roya is pregnant in the role she has in the theater play created in Amin’s mind. She also gets pregnant in her imaginary life with Amin. Pregnancy and birth, as symbols of creation, are fake in both cases; in the theater play, it’s part of Roya’s costume design, and in the imaginary life of Amin and Roya, and also in the play, it is Amin’s brainchild. He is subconsciously trying to reproduce himself and extend his existence in as many ways as he can: through creating all these characters (as his relatives) and situations, and through getting his created wife and theater actress pregnant both in life and art, even as it will be seen, he imagines Amin as being a composer, an artist, trying to create a masterpiece and extend himself beyond

his lifespan. Not only does Amin create the story and the characters for us, but he also supposes that he is the composer of the piece of music being played from the nursing station, and the very supposition forms the basis of the film’s main plot. The piece of music reaching him through his auditory perception, which is recognized to be active in the comatose and connects and extends him to the outside world, triggers his imagination to lead and align the story towards that of the life of a composer.

In the course of the narrative, when Amin has his first quarrel with Roya, he decides to change the path of the story or omit this character from it, but later gives up the idea. (The main character *engages* through his *extended* self, namely “Amin”, with his own characters, as he is both the



Roya on the stage



“I like to have lived before the plugs are pulled; even an imaginary life.”

158

creator and the spectator of his own story; and *we*, from the outside *engage* with him and all that he creates.) Here, we are again reminded to *recognize* that Roya, Amin’s

married life with her, and whatever else we observe, except (perhaps) his being in a coma, are questionable and unreal: “...I prefer when a few years later, they decide



At the sight of “Amin”’s amputated finger, the spectator may relate it to the accident that left him in a coma.



Roya's fake pregnancy

to pull the plug, there be someone from my *relatives* to be phoned for gaining permission. I don't want it all to end in solitude." Even in and after his death, he wants to stay connected to the world; he wants to be *extended* beyond boundaries.

Amin's mind *engages* in playful manipulations of time, as a tool at the disposal of an author, within the development of the story, and thus his interest in manipulating events is emphasized: "designing the past in the mind of a character which exists in the future is an interesting thing to do. In a future that doesn't exist, Roya is thinking about a past which is later supposed to be made." He thus tries to chronologically

align us with his story as he pleases.

Since the middle of the film, it seems that Amin has heard things about decisions regarding pulling the plug. Here the spectator who has a serious interest in cinema, can be possibly *aligned* transtextually to the story of the disconnecting of HAL 9000, in Stanley Kubrick's *2001: A Space Odyssey*, where he began to go mad and misbehave as he had sensed things about plans made by the spaceship crew to disconnect him. In many parts, at this point, the film's pictures are seen as jerky and stretched, which can be due to the distress of Amin's subconscious, as the creator of the film's images, about the unplugging and death.

In his unspoken voice, he wishes to *align* the nurses to take a close look at his face and see that he is able to twitch his muscles, and give up on pulling the plugs. Apart from the jerky and stretched pictures from Amin's perspective, which include himself, too (due to the first-person narrative, being narrated as it would by a third person focalizer, we *empathize* with Amin, seeing him in trouble, as framed in those distorted shots), Amin's distress is portrayed through (*aligned* into) his troubled behavior as he tries to focus for the composition of his masterpiece. It may in fact be his in vain quest, in his actual mental state as a comatose, to remember his real past, while struggling with his eminent death. Here Amin is subconsciously *empathizing* with his

creator as he is the rendition or translation of the main character's troubled condition trying in vain to regain consciousness, into the context of Amin's artistic impotence.

As Amin cannot compose the masterpiece he longs to compose, he constantly hears whistles in his head. (*Aligning* us transtextually to Beethoven's condition who heard ongoing buzzes) sound effects, music and also cinematographic effects and editing play very important parts here in describing Amin's condition, and *aligning* us with him. When Amin is shown playing the piano, there are people behind him, listening to his playing, this shot accompanies special sound and cinematographic effects, and everything in it, except Amin's ear is flow, indicating



The obsessed hearing

emphatically his obsession with hearing and faulty perception in the coma. We are thus *aligned* to view the ear as the chief *connector* of the main character and his *extended* and altered self to the outside world; a connection that is vague as it is shown to us as “flow”.

“A whistle, a repetitive note, reverberates in all of the wrinkles of my brain, bothersome scattered thoughts, irritate the texture of my brain, like tiny needles.”

Later unable to compose his desired piece, Amin tears up what he had already written, and throws it to the floor. The sheet’s getting torn up, and the ink spilt on it, indicate Amin’s turbulent mental state;

Amin’s mind like this sheet, is all torn up, full of dark spots and ambiguities. This sheet again is an object bearing projections and *extensions* of the main characters’ subconscious image of his own mental state.

Amin fills up the gaps in his story by his subconscious prejudgments and obsessive thoughts. Such a narrative can be *judged* as biased and questionable. For example in the 29th minute of the film he says: “I can imagine Roya, in the make-up room, after my going. I have become unbearable for her. Perhaps she resorts to someone else, someone logical, my psychologist... for example.”, he is forming *allegiances* about a character he has both created and



The bothering incessant whistle



The image of Amin's mental distress



Imagined gaze



Imagined gaze repeated emphatically

is viewing, trying to *figure out her feelings* and *judging her morally*.

Another indicator of Amin's obsessiveness is what he says about his being watched and judged by others in a penetrative manner: "I feel that everyone is looking at me. It seems like their gazes penetrate my skin, flesh and bones. Everyone is judging my mind, my faulty and futile thoughts. I abhor being judged by others. I feel like strangling such people." He is *judging* people about *judging* him, forming *allegiances* about his own made-up characters which are stick-figural projections of the real-world people who decide about his life (and disconnection), as he lies there unable to do anything.

Apart from obsession, symptoms like restlessness, bewilderment, auditory hallucinations, desire to hurt oneself, sudden sickly change of appearance, (as in Amin's altered state when he cuts his own hair, which *aligns* us transtextually to the scene in Darren Aronofsky's 1998 film, *Pi*, at the final chapter of which the main character who has gone mad, frantically shaves his own head), sloppiness, irregular thought and speech patterns, illusion and delirium, alienation from the society, paranoia, losing motivation and judgment power, difficulty connecting emotionally to others, severe weakness or intensity of the senses, memory loss and attention deficiency are *recognizable* in Amin, *aligning* us to his possible development of schizophrenia.⁹ Interestingly, the painting



Amin cutting his own hair



It's as if the painting is nailed to Amin's nerves!

given as a present to Roya, toward which Amin is highly cynical, as he imagines that Roya is starting an affair with his psychologist (another of the made-up characters Amin *judges* as a badman), is a reproduction of a painting by Van Gogh, who was himself a schizophrenic, and had interestingly cut off his *ear*. (Amin, later in the film, is shown to cut off his finger, *aligning* us transtextually to the story of Van Gogh.) When the painting is shown, the shot is accompanied by hyperbolic sound effects and slow motions to allow us better *empathize* with Amin, as if the painting is getting nailed to Amin's nerves. Amin's sickly and obsessive hatred of the painting and his inability to focus due to his fallible and bothersome auditory perception is therefore emphatically

recognized.

Another indicator of Amin's questionable narrative is the key we are *aligned* by the insert shot to notice he has in his hand. He is absent mindedly unaware of this key, and cannot thus open the door of his house with it. Perhaps the key to solving the puzzle of the narrative and figuring out Amin's past and the reason he fell into a coma, is also in his hand (and his amputated finger). (A possible *allegiance*)

In his argument with Roya, Amin introduces the reason for his foul mood as, inability to play the piano, as if his fingers were numb. And after Roya says: "Perhaps you don't need them anymore." (And our getting *aligned* to the fingers some more, following the key insert), Amin is shown



The key in the hand



Amin as viewed by himself at the beach



He finds a sickle, all of a sudden at the beach

in a subjective shot, standing on the beach, seen from his own point of view. There, we see an insert of a sickle, the very existence of which at that location and Amin's use of it, i. e. for amputating his finger, are highly questionable. At the beginning of the same shot, Amin is symbolically seen entering a space that encloses and frames him; literally, we are *aligned* to view pictures of Amin's life as he himself is framing them. It's his imaginary life story, told from his own perspective as an *active externalist*.

From this point on, in some parts, we see repetitive scenes and shots with minor differences, to be allowed to *empathize* better with Amin and his comatose creator whose conditions worsen as the

narrative progresses and their suspicions and paranoia become more severe. For example in his mental soliloquy, as a response to Roya's telling him that she loves him, he says: "She is lying...she is playing roles. She wants to pretend to be innocent, like when she is on the stage." (Making *allegiances* about his own characters.) Through the two-way *alignment* and interaction of the comatose character and Amin, he now even forgets his own imaginations and accounts of the events, for example he doesn't remember that Roya got all those bruises and wounds as he was having a fight with the taxi driver. He seems to be going out of his mind, forming the allegiance that Roya wants to poison him by the tea she brings him so



Amin amputating his finger



Amin holds the tea glass and breaks it by pressing it hard in his hand. "I quite enjoyed the glass pieces penetrating my flesh. I didn't feel any pain at all. Right at that moment, I felt that I was going mad. I felt that all my brain vessels were bursting...the magical colors of the fireflies' wings filled up my mind...why did I really fall into a coma? The way things are going, a few possibilities seem logical; I may have had a stroke in my sleep due to a nervous breakdown. Or, maybe I had suddenly been so carried away by the whistling in my head while crossing the street, that a car hit me. I may even have committed suicide."



Roya is surprised why Amin doesn't remember where she got all those bruises! (Her empathy (sympathy) builds for him.)



Roya signing the permission form

often! Roya empathizes with him as she recognizes how serious his condition is.

At the time they decide to pull the plug, Amin's unreliable perspectives are underlined. If he is in a coma, he can hear about the unplugging, but the pictures related to it, (the hospital, the doctors, the nurses, Roya who comes to sign the permission form, etc.) must all be created in his imagination. (Like the rest of the film, of course.)

"They are pulling the plug. I wish someone would take a close look at my face, I feel that I can move my eyelid...I feel I even can talk in a few moments...I feel the air passing on my skin...the sound of the fireflies' moving their wings is

fading."

As Amin is told by Roya that he is becoming a father, signs of recovery appear in his memory: "I am becoming a father. The sounds in my head have diminished. I even hear music in my head at times. This means that I am getting better. If everything is going well, why am I in a coma? (He must have passed into death.) It's so boring to be constantly after your death in the future, while you are in a past in which you are still alive."

His life and cause of falling into the coma are reviewed in his mind as he is dying, we are *aligned* to the past and the initiator of the coma through a flashback: "I recorded the songs of the miners...I spent some hours a day with them...one afternoon I heard a



Birth: Death

170

draining sound from the main tunnel...there were still some miners in there...I ran, before thinking what is supposed to happen." Amin's facial wounds as he lies on the hospital bed are similar to his wounds as he is pulled out from the mine. His left hand is also tied after the tunnel accident, indicating its having been hurt, which probably entailed the amputation of his finger. The main character, who had sensed the absence of his own finger, gave the fact an altered subconscious treatment by imagining to have cut it himself by the sickle. In effect, the main character's cognition, and mental and sensory experiences are in part shaped through those of Amin through whom the main character is building an extended cognition. (See: Clark, 2008)

It is unclear how reliable the final scene

of the film is, in which Roya is playing with a little girl (her and Amin's daughter?), and even whether Amin was ever married.

In the end Amin is seen at the theater, having come to see Roya and give her a package: "Hi, my name is Amin Nazari, I am a friend of your brother, Davoud's...", therefore, what we heard at the beginning of the film, and the girl having been called Roya, living in his neighborhood, whom Amin later married, must all have arisen from Amin's fading memories.

Conclusion

Wandering in the Fog, deals mainly with the limits of existence, it deals with



The mine accident



The mine accident



Similar wounds allowing us to form *allegiances* about the initiating factor of the coma.

172

the idea that where we begin and end as selves and beings and the boundaries of our minds may not be clear cut. We constantly try to engage with our environments, and extend ourselves and our minds by coupling with other agents in the world and putting pieces of ourselves in here and there; we seek to be greater than the sum of our physical parts, and transcend death in any form, be it even through death itself. The film is a multifold experience of engagement and empathy with characters: that of the spectator with the comatose character, that of him with his made-up characters and agents in the outside world reaching him through fading memories and auditory perception, and the multilateral empathies and engagements of characters within his imaginary story. It is an individual and

small scale model of the form a web of extended condition can assume, through the interactions of agents with their environments, and other members of their species in active externalism.

Endnotes

1. Further elaboration on these scholars' cognitive views on film is made in: Freeland, C. (2001). Teaching Cognitive Science and the Arts II. Available online at: www.aesthetics-online.org/articles/index.php?articles_id=12, accessed on January 27th, 2015.

And:

Plantinga, C. (2002). "Cognitive Film Theory: An Insider's Appraisal", in Journal of Film Studies, vol. 12, no. 2, pp. 15-37. Available online at: <http://id.erudit.org/>



Final projections

[iderudit/024878ar](#), accessed on January 27th, 2015.

2. Smith shows that “identification” is a misleading way to think about what happens through our engagement with characters. Identification seems to imply taking on another’s state of being, but we don’t necessarily mimic a character’s emotions. Smith talks instead of allegiance, the extending of our sympathy and other emotions to characters on the basis of their emotional states. Allegiance, Smith maintains, depends partly on the moral evaluations we make about the character’s actions and personality. (Bordwell, 2011)

3. <http://www.davidbordwell.net/blog/2011/05/16/alignment-allegiance-and-murder/>. Viewed January 5th, 2015.

4. Smith’s model is also applied by Deborah J. Thomas, in an article:

Thomas, D. J. (2012). “Framing the “Melancomie”: Character, Aesthetics and Affect in Wes Anderson’s *Rushmore*”, in *New Review of Film and Television Studies*, 10:1, 97-117.

In his Article, “Unreliable Narration in Cinema: Facing the Cognitive challenge Arising from Literary Studies”, Per Krogh Hansen’s, adopts a more or less similar methodology in analyzing the unreliable perspectives of the character of John Forbes Nash, the Nobel prize winning mathematician who developed schizophrenia, in Ron Howard’s 2001 film *A Beautiful Mind*. However he doesn’t use Smith’s model and terminology:

Hansen, P. K. (2009) *Unreliable Narration in Cinema*. University of Southern Denmark. http://cf.hum.uva.nl/narratology/a09_hansen.htm” (Amsterdam International Electronic

Journal for Cultural Narratology (AJCN))

5. For more on unreliable narrators, see: Saeedzadeh & Shahba (n.d) "Cognitive Approach to Unreliable Narratives in Cinema". In Honarhaye ziba. Forthcoming. Accepted to be published.

6. This character, too, possesses unreliable perspectives, as we later see that he goes mad and develops schizophrenia, forming "the madman", which is one of Riggan's categories of unreliable narrators. (Riggan, 1981)

7. "Identification" implying taking on another's state of being. (Bordwell, 2011)

8. Clark and Chalmers define The Naked Mind as: A package of resources and operations we can always bring to bear on a cognitive task. (Clark & Chalmers, 1998)

9. <http://www.medicinenet.com/schizophrenia/article.htm>, accessed online on: January 27th, 2015.

References

Bordwell, D. (1985). *Narration in the Fiction Film*. Madison, WI: University of Wisconsin Press.

Clark, A. (2008). *Supersizing the Mind: Embodiment, Action, and Cognitive Extension*. New York: Oxford University Press.

Riggan, W. (1981). *Pícaros, Madmen, Naïfs, and Clowns: The Unreliable First-person Narrator*. Univ. of Oklahoma Press: Norman.

Smith, M. (1995). *Engaging Characters: Fiction, Emotion, and the Cinema*. Oxford: Clarendon Press.

Bordwell, D. (1989). "A Case for Cognitivism". In: *IRIS* Spring 1989, No. 9, pp. 11-41.

Clark, A. (2010). "Memento's Revenge: The Extended Mind, Extended". In: *The Extended Mind*. Published by The MIT Press.

Clark, A. & Chalmers, D. (1998). "The Extended Mind". In: *Analysis*. Vol. 58, No. 1 (Jan., 1998), pp. 7-19, Published by: Oxford University Press. Article Stable URL: <http://www.jstor.org/stable/3328150>

Hansen, P. K. (2009) *Unreliable Narration in Cinema*. University of Southern Denmark. http://cf.hum.uva.nl/narratology/a09_hansen.htm (Amsterdam International Electronic Journal for Cultural Narratology (AJCN))

Plantinga, A. C. (2002). "Cognitive Film Theory: An Insider's Appraisal", in *Journal of Film Studies*, vol. 12, no. 2, pp. 15-37. Available online at: <http://id.erudit.org/iderudit/024878ar>, accessed on January 27th, 2015.

Saeedzadeh & Shahba (n.d) "Cognitive Approach to Unreliable Narratives in Cinema". In Honarhaye ziba. Forthcoming. Accepted to be published.

Smith, M. (2011). "Empathy, Expansionism, and the Extended Mind", in Coplan, A. & Goldie, P. (eds). *Empathy: Philosophical and Psychological Perspectives*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Thomas, D. J. (2012). "Framing the "Melancomie": Character, Aesthetics and Affect in Wes Anderson's *Rushmore*", in *New Review of Film and Television Studies*, 10:1, 97-117.

Internet Sources

<http://www.davidbordwell.net/blog/2011/05/16/alignment-allegiance-and-murder/>

http://www.aesthetics-online.org/articles/index.php?articles_id=12

<http://www.medicinenet.com/schizophrenia/article.htm>

Film

Wandering in the Fog (2010). Written and Directed by: Bahram Tavakkoli. Produced by: Javad Nowrooz Beygi. Distributed by: Loh-e-Talai Cultural Firm & Tasvir Gostar-e-Pasargad.