Anomalous foreknowledge and cognitive impenetrability in *Gnomeo and Juliet*.

Abstract

This essay locates film adaptations of well-known originals within the context of two interrelated perceptual processes. The first of these is Richard Gerrig's notion of anomalous suspense, in which audiences experience suspense even if they know the outcome of a film through repeat viewings. The second of these is Jerry Fodor's concept of cognitive impenetrability, in which the human brain can have multiple responses to the same visual information. Lower level non-conscious brain functions can respond to visual stimuli in automated ways even if higher level conscious brain functions understand that the automated responses are being deceived. The essay explores how a loose film adaptation of a canonical 'original', *Gnomeo and Juliet,* manipulates these perceptual anomalies at the aesthetic and narrative levels. The film has two interrelated reflexive bundlings of anomalous suspense and cognitive impenetrability. The first is foreknowledge about certain well-known elements of the adapted narrative which characters comment on, and which are eventually transcended. The second is the film's link between animation's ontological perceptual illusion which makes the inanimate become animated, and the diegetic status of the supposedly inanimate garden gnomes being able to move of their own volition. Both of these elements exploit the brain's modular distinctions between automated and conscious perceptual responses.

Keywords

Perception, foreknowledge, enunciation, suspense, psychology.

Short Title

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MAIN TEXT

Introduction

Film adaptation frequently not only translates an 'original' narrative into a new medium, but also manipulates a number of thematic concerns, both from that original and from the two intersecting media, in metacinematic terms. Many examples of this process have been elaborated in detail, spanning from Agnieszka Rasmus' account of how Shakespearean adaptation can 'respond to the plays' metatheatricality by either rejecting alienating devices or finding a cinematic counterpart to the theatre's self-reflexivity' (147) to Costas Constandinides' claim that contemporary adaptations of graphic novels 'perform the grammar of comic books and video games in a way that challenges the limits and traditional techniques of cinema' (79). This essay explores the ways in which the relationships between perception, the film medium, and the process of adapting a canonical non-film text into an animated film are reflexively manipulated in a loose adaptation of a Shakespearean 'original', *Gnomeo and Juliet*. This film shifts the star-cross'd lovers from the stage and Verona to an animated film and suburban English gardens populated with garden gnomes and other related anthropomorphic objects. Cinematic reflexivity links animation's illusory movement of still images with objects that should be inanimate but which can diegetically move, and with a narrative in which the characters explicitly disavow the original's foreknown tragic conclusion.

Anomalous perception and film

The academic study of perception in relation to film has a history as old as the discipline itself, with Hugo Münsterberg an early and for a long time forgotten proponent of cinema as the central 'domain of the psychologist who analyses the working of the mind' (31). His early studies approached perception in a relatively haphazard fashion, however, and without the empirical foundations of more recent cognitivist approaches. Although there is some debate about the exact nature of perception in these recent studies (see, for example, Anderson and Anderson; Hochberg and Brooks), there is sufficient substantive agreement for the purposes of this essay. One particular aspect of this cognitivist approach to perception is manipulated through the process of adapting a relatively well known canonical non-film text, and this relates to the schemata whereby the human brain responds to what it already knows will happen. In the case of a famous play like *Romeo and Juliet*, numerous narrative elements have achieved the status of cultural conventions to the point where an animated film like *Gnomeo and Juliet,* which is at least partly marketed at children, can make assumptions about audiences' foreknowledge of how the story will unfold, and can manipulate these assumptions in a metacinematic manner.

The theoretical approach to the relationships between perception and foreknowledge has not yet been applied to adaptation. Such an approach does, however, tightly bundle film's illusory impression of movement with a conception of human cognition which separates visual perception from the mental processes which differentiate between that which has not been experienced before and that which is foreknown. I will come to the specifically filmic element of this in a moment, but underpinning the phenomenon is what Richard Gerrig calls 'anomalous suspense'. Gerrig is concerned with repetition of the same written narratives,

rather than adaptations of previous narratives in different media, but his ecological perspective can apply to both. His aim is to explain how a reader might experience suspense about the outcome of a narrative on repeated readings, even if the reader is one hundred percent certain about the outcome of that which is coded towards being suspenseful. He explains this by situating the reader's response in an evolutionary context in which responding to various stimuli by expecting only a limited number of outcomes would be a dangerous activity. Generally, perceptual stimuli are responded to in very routine ways determined by habituation. Thus, Gerrig claims that 'cognitive processes optimally deliver schematic expectations' (173). This line of thinking corresponds to more recent developments in neurobiology, exemplified in Jakob Hohwy' s *The Predictive Mind* which argues that '[t]he mind exists in prediction. Our perceptual experience of the world arises in our attempts at predicting our own current sensory input' (258). Typically, then, the human mind pays attention to a small number of stimuli which it predicts will be relevant and repeated. However, the human mind also evolved in an environment in which habitual, expected stimuli could also be accompanied by more infrequent dangers. Charles Darwin's description of this threatening environment, in which 'each at some period of its life […] has to struggle for life, and to suffer great destruction' (61), has influenced a biocultural approach to film which stresses how the human mind searches for traces of such threats amongst the more frequent and predictable security of the habitual. So, for Torben Grodal, '[i]f we suddenly see or hear something, we may experience a shock although we may find out after a short analysis that there is no reason to be alarmed. […] The perceptual impact is caused by inferior, automated, and non-conscious processes that register strong changes of stimuli' (32). This is the context which determines what Gerrig calls our '*expectation of uniqueness*' (170, original emphasis). Although our ancestors might cognitively process their repeated, habitual visits to reliable sources of food or to a watering hole in response to a number of predictable

perceptual stimuli, as Hohwy claims, '[t]he mind exists in prediction' (258). Predicting the possibility of an unlikely, but possible, disruption of the habitual, in the form of an attack from predators or rivals, enhances the chances of survival in Darwin's brutal 'struggle for existence' (5). At infrequent but very important moments, perceptual stimuli might demonstrate Gerrig's '*uniqueness*', and in response the human mind processes perceptual stimuli with this expectation in mind.

Humans have therefore evolved with the need to expect the unexpected in order to survive and thrive, and our contemporary cognitive processes have maintained this flight or fight response to the kind of threatening situations which might be replicated and manipulated in suspenseful narratives. Suspense, then, can be anomalous – even after our higher level rational brain functions tell us that there is no threat, our lower level non-rational brain functions warn us to be on our guard – 'our moment-by-moment processes evolved in response to the brute fact of nonrepetition' (Gerrig 171). Various forms of narrative can exploit this evolutionary cognitive distinction to create suspense even when we know the outcome of that which is coded as being suspenseful.

David Bordwell uses Gerrig's notion of 'anomalous suspense' to explain the affective experiences of repeat viewings of suspenseful films such as *North by Northwest*, and of films which relate to well-known events such as the assassination of Abraham Lincoln (*The Birth of a Nation*) or the destruction of 9/11 (*United 93*). He expands on Gerrig's distinction between high and low level cognitive processes by using John Fodor's notion of 'cognitive impenetrability'. Perception, for Fodor, is modular, with different parts of the brain operating different processes. Optical illusions, such as the famous Müller-Lyer pair of inward and outward facing arrows containing horizontal lines of equal length, demonstrate this

impenetrability – just as we *know* that the two lines are the same length but cannot help but perceive them as different, so too we *know*, after the first viewing of *North by Northwest*, that Roger Thornhill (Cary Grant) will save Eve Kendell (Eve Marie Saint) from plummeting off Mount Rushmore, but cannot help responding to the cinematic cues about the danger with anomalous suspense, as though with each repeat viewing she might actually fall.

Anomalous foreknowledge and adaptation

This account could apply to adaptations of well-known non-film texts in a relatively linear manner. Just as repeat viewings of the same suspenseful films might produce anomalous suspense, so might viewings of adaptations of the same repeated 'original' narratives produce something that one might call anomalous foreknowledge. To an extent, there is an existing body of academic analysis about how film adaptation uses foreshadowing to generate visual metaphors for already known Shakespearean narratives, themes and dialogue. This is particularly the case for *Gnomeo and Juliet*'s source which begins, of course, with a definitive statement about the narrative's conclusion. So, for example, Patricia Tatspaugh (140) has noted how an iron grille which separates the lovers in Castellani's adaptation prefigures the couple's fate generally, and the Friar's disastrous quarantine more specifically. Similarly, Courtney Lehmann links Zeffirelli's adaptation with imagery of warfare, weaponry and Christianity, all of which contribute to a 'foreshadowing of the bloody business to come' (141). These accounts, however, analyse foreknowledge not as an established conclusion about events which might somehow be anomalously overturned, but as subtle translations of foreknown Shakespearean themes into a different, medium-specific form of language. Thus, Alfredo Michel Modenessi claims that Baz Luhrmann's adaptation's

(*William Shakespeare's Romeo + Juliet*) foreshadowing 'underscores the irony of a play that repeatedly tricks its protagonists into performing a predetermined script for which few acting tips are provided, but where improvisation is impossible' (78). The focus of these analyses is on how film might exploit and manipulate authorial fidelity, rather than on how it might exploit and manipulate cognition and perception. For these accounts, the pleasures that audiences might derive from film adaptations of canonical sources are located in a conscious engagement with how the adaptation manipulates an existing form of ironic foreknowledge into a new medium, rather than on an anomalous response which temporarily, partly and non-consciously believes that, this time, the tragic outcome might be averted.

Nevertheless, it is possible that these adaptations utilise imagery to reinforce, at the visual perceptual level, spectators' foreknowledge about the upcoming events to which the images refer. Indeed, the potential pleasures of manipulating an audience's anomalous foreknowledge is something which seems to influence how filmmakers approach canonical adaptations. Luhrmann's views on the subject are particularly appropriate. Discussing his adaptation, he claims that

> The audience know this is gonna happen. How can it happen in a way in which their delicious expectation and enjoyment of 'it's gonna happen' can be suspended so that when it happens it's a surprise that they knew was gonna happen? Romeo and Juliet opens with something like 'Doth with their death bury their parent's strife'. You are told right up front that the lovers, or a lover, is going to die […], you know where it's going to conclude.
>
> (Luhrmann 2011)

Luhrmann wants an audience reaction to be not merely an ironic response to Shakespeare's transmediality, or different ways in which an individual adaptation might render and manipulate the 'original's' tragic inevitability, but instead 'delicious expectation and

enjoyment of "it's gonna happen" [which] can be suspended so that when it happens it's a surprise that they knew was gonna happen'. Luhrmann builds up towards this anomalous response by repeating and emphasising the opening prologue's foreknowledge in very specific ways.

His adaptation begins by repeating the prologue's text twice over. The first of these narrations comes from a news anchorwoman (Edwina Moore) who delivers the playtext's opening lines from a television suspended in blackness, the screen's headline emblazoned with the written text 'Star-Cross'd Lovers'. As the prologue nears its end, Luhrmann cuts to rapidly edited scenes of urban violence in shots replete with rapid zooms and whip pans. These shots are accompanied by melodramatic choral music, and a repeat of the prologue in voice-over, this time in a deeper male voice (Pete Postlethwaite). Selected lines from this voice-over are shown on a black screen amongst this montage, into which Luhrmann then inserts two further layers of written Shakespearean text – newspaper and magazine headlines referring to the Montague/Capulet feud, and the names and descriptions of important characters next to frozen close-ups of their faces. The climatic conclusion to this opening not only builds momentum through scenes of violence and rising choral music, but also through the way in which the rapid montage includes scenes from the play's and film's inevitable ending, showing the lovers' families mourning at the death scene, and Romeo's point-of-view shot of the cathedral interior where Juliet lies. Luhrmann's 'delicious expectation and enjoyment of "it's gonna happen"' is further emphasised through images suggesting an orgasmic context to the montage's climax. Exploding fireworks and an open-mouthed, eyes-closed-in-ecstasy transcendent choirboy, who is accompanied by an odd moaning on the soundtrack, synthesise with the accelerating scenes of violence and foreknowledge. Romeo's view of the cathedral interior, furthermore, is partial in both senses of the word, as the lead

only begins to open the door, not yet revealing the horror awaiting within, teasing towards how Luhrmann's 'delicious expectation and enjoyment of "it's gonna happen" can be suspended so that when it happens it's a surprise that they knew was gonna happen'. Luhrmann's statement, and his treatment of this scene, seems almost paradoxical, because further textual and visual references to the narrative's outcome contribute towards suspending foreknowledge and enhancing surprise. This paradox demonstrates the anomalous nature of foreknowledge in canonical adaptations. Increasing references to the narrative's inevitability paradoxically contributes towards an audience's anomalous hope that the ending might be undone.

Cognitive impenetrability and animation

There is one final element of Bordwell's account of cognitive impenetrability which suggests something about why it should be an animated adaptation like *Gnomeo and Juliet* that extends anomalous foreknowledge to its logical conclusion by overcoming the playtext's tragic inevitability. This aspect of cognitive impenetrability relates to the film medium's metacinematic potential for manipulating these premises within adaptations of canonical sources, so that *film* adaptation offers more potential for reflexivity than repeated performances on *stage*. In a paragraph of merely two sentences, and as a means to demonstrate cognitive impenetrability using a filmic example, rather than as the prelude to an investigation into the potential relationships between cognitive impenetrability and filmic perception, Bordwell writes that '[a]s students of cinema, we're familiar with the fact that vision can be cognitively impenetrable. We know that movies consist of single frames, but we can't see them in projection; we see a moving image' (4, my pagination). This is an ontological element of how the cinema activates and utilises the perception of its audiences,

and it is possible for film to render this ontology into thematic, visual and narrative form in a similar way to how Rasmus and Constandinides, discussed above, conceptualise adaptation as a potential exploiter of two different forms of grammar in two different media. Film adaptations of famous non-film texts not only contain film's inherent cognitive impenetrability in relation to how single frames gain the illusion of continuous movement, but also contain anomalous foreknowledge in relation to repeating foreknown narrative events that can continue to elicit suspense or doubt about foreknown outcomes. Both of these perceptual activities rely on the same evolutionary distinction between low level non-rational automated responses (in which film gives the impression of movement, and in which foreknown events can still be responded to as though they were happening for the first time) and higher level rational responses (in which the movements which are perceived are mapped onto schemata of motivation, speculation, characterisation etc., and in which there are various forms of interplay between how a particular adaptation relates to the 'original'/other adaptations of the same source, and to those automated activities which respond to the narrative as though it might unfold unpredictably).

An animated adaptation like *Gnomeo and Juliet* can, and does, activate a heightened manipulation of these complex metacinematic relationships in ways which go far beyond the non-animated adaptations discussed above. This is because animation relates to the cognitive impenetrability of single frames appearing as continuous movement in a more fundamental way than live action film. Live action film stages real moving pro-filmic events, turns these into a series of still analogue or digital images, and then projects these at speeds which create the impression of continuous movement. Animation dispenses with the real moving pro-filmic events. Even if real objects are used, such as in stop motion animation, they are, at this initial stage, motionless. The extent to which this process defines animation is demonstrated

by the name of the medium/genre. Film's reflexive impulse can allegorise and thematise this process. Animated films such as *Pinocchio* and the *Toy Story* franchise feature objects which should be inanimate, but which become literally animated in the diegetic world, and cinematically animated in the industrial animation process. This is a reflexive narrativisation of the animation process. *Gnomeo and Juliet* shares this reflexive narrativisation, as various diegetic garden objects which should be inanimate can move of their own volition, and this movement is rendered in the form of animation. But this is also an adaptation of a well-known original, or at least an original with certain well known elements that are commented upon and exploited both narratively and metacinematically. As such, it combines the reflexive manipulation of cognitive impenetrability in relation to doubly animating the inanimate, with a reflexive manipulation of anomalous foreknowledge in relation to foreknown narrative elements.

Two forms of anomalous perceptual reflexivity in *Gnomeo and Juliet*

The film begins by immediately linking these two metacinematic manipulations. A static shot looks onto an empty proscenium stage, with the red curtain still down. The only sounds are orchestral instruments tuning up, intermittent audience coughs, and the conductor clicking his baton to usher in silence. Although the image appears to be computer designed, rather than a projection of recorded pro-filmic reality, it is not yet animated. The film's audience is positioned as a member of a theatrical audience, foregrounding a canonicity which downplays an important element of traditional realist cinema. This downplaying relates to Christian Metz's two categories of cinematic enunciation. Metz derived these from Emile Benveniste's linguistic categories *histoire* (story) and *discours* (discourse). *Histoire* is a form of enunciation in which the enunciator is concealed, and in which 'there is no longer

even a narrator. […] No one speaks here; events seem to tell themselves' (Benveniste 241). *Discours*, on the other hand, is articulation which reveals its source, and the fact that its enunciation belongs to a partial creative force. Realist film, for Metz, appears as seamless *histoire* despite the fact that it is actually constructed *discours*. It has the effect of appearing as a natural unfolding of events before a passive audience who seem to spontaneously observe from a transcendent and objective position, when in fact it is a subjective construct. Metz claims then, that 'traditional film is presented as *histoire*, and not as *discours*. And yet it is *discours*, [...] but the basic characteristic of this kind of *discours*, and the very principle of its effectiveness as *discours*, is precisely that it obliterates all traces of the enunciation, and masquerades as *histoire*' (544). *Gnomeo and Juliet*'s opening shot of the proscenium stage demonstrates how adaptation can operate within this context. To some extent it is *discours*, foregrounding that the work is derived from an acknowledged enunciating theatrical source. But this foregrounding will be swiftly supressed into *histoire*, when the acknowledged enunciating source is replaced with the presentation of gnomes who attempt to transcend the foreknown *discours* by altering the foreknown ending. The film's metacinematic animation of the supposedly inanimate gnomes is also *discours*-like, in that it narrativises the illusory process of animation, revealing the filmmakers' constructive work. In diegetically animating the diegetically inanimate, the process of aesthetically animating the aesthetically inanimate is reflexively allegorised. The source of the film's animators' enunciation is revealed, but this enunciation is manipulated into an aesthetic form which makes a narrative virtue of this potentially alienating revelation of enunciation. Thus, if this enunciative revelation is *discours*, reflexively manipulating this revelation into narrative form is *histoire*.

This oscillation between *discours* and *histoire* is played out in the film's first animated movements. A small gnome scurries onto the stage, turns to the audience and

announces that 'the story you are about to see has been told before – a lot. And now we are going to tell it again – but different.' This is an immediate admission that the film is *discours* (told before), which is almost as immediately shifted into *histoire* (but different). He goes on to elaborate about the star-cross'd lovers, all the while remaining very static, only his mouth moving. This first brief example of mobile animation, then, is linked to a *discours*-like articulation of foreknowledge, and is preceded by an absence of animation (the static image of the stage) and accompanied by a very limited form of animation (only the mouth moving). An even more explicit example of foreknowledge quickly follows, as the gnome announces that before the retelling can begin he must read a 'rather long, boring prologue'. This heightening of foreknowledge is accompanied by a heightening of animation. The scroll under the gnome's arm is unfurled, and one end of this sweeps off the stage into the theatrical audience. As the gnome reads the playtext's opening lines a shepherd's crook enters from each side of the stage to whip the gnome away, but each time the gnome notices, slightly turning his head, and it recedes. Just before the gnome reaches Shakespeare's definitive opening statement about the foreknown fate of the protagonists, 'a pair of star-cross'd lovers take their life' (Prologue 6), a trap door opens up below him, sweeping away gnome and textually-foretelling scroll in a moment of rapid animation. This is a complex interplay of, on the one hand, foretelling what will happen (*discours*) and suggesting that the foreknown might in fact not occur (*histoire*) and, on the other hand, that which should be immobile being able to move and the temporary reluctance of this potentially mobile object to animate itself/be animated. The prologue concludes with the incontrovertible articulation of the foreknown tragic ending narrowly prevented through an act of rapid animation, in a sequence in which the animation of the supposedly inanimate gnome had until then been minimised.

The film proper then begins with the two feuding human owners of the gardens in which the gnomes live. Each leaves their home and drives off to work. These figures are animated, but they are also diegetically human, and therefore should be able to move. A signal is sent to the garden gnomes that they too are now free to move, and this signal is delivered by figures that possess self-animating qualities somewhere between a human and what one would expect of an inanimate figurine. They are weathervanes; a pig over one garden and a cockerel over another. They turn, as though blown by the wind, to show the gnomes that the humans have gone, but then also smile and wink to reveal that they can move according to their own volition. The gnomes can now begin their daily routines and, as with the minimisation of animation accompanying the foreknown elements in the prologue, these movements are not yet accompanied by the overt *discours* of the adaptation's Shakespearean origins. Before the humans opened their front doors, the two houses' post boxes are shown, and these contain such Shakespearean traces, the street sign below labelled 'Verona Drive', one post box labelled 'Montague' and numbered '2B', the other labelled 'Capulet', and with a cross through the number and letter '2B'. Although the cinematography of this Shakespearean *discours* includes the impression of a whip pan from one post box to the other, there is no diegetic animation of that which should be inanimate at this stage. Anomalous foreknowledge in relation to the Shakespearean narrative is thus displayed while the cognitive impenetrability of both the animated film medium and the supposedly inanimate gnomes is downplayed. When the gnomes begin to move about their gardens, this process is reversed: their Montague- and Capulet-like characteristics are downplayed to the level of blue and red clothing colour codings, with no mention of these Shakespearean last names and, at this stage, no Shakespearean dialogue or paraphrases thereof. The cognitive impenetrability of the medium and gnomic subject matter is metacinematically displayed, while the anomalous foreknowledge of Shakespearean *discours* is downplayed. At this early stage,

then, the film's two metacinematic manipulations of anomalous foreknowledge and cognitive impenetrability concerning the animation of the supposedly inanimate are separated.

More overt Shakespearean references which bundle together these metacinematic manipulations only occur once the notion of foreknowledge about the outcome of the original has been articulated by one of the characters. After Juliet (Emily Blunt) returns to her garden from her first accidental meeting with Gnomeo (James McAvoy), she is interrogated about her sheepish behaviour by the Nurse-like Nanette (Ashley Jensen), a ceramic frog water fountain. On finding out that Juliet's new beloved is a 'blue' Nanette become very excited, because such a love, she claims, is inevitably 'doomed'. More overt Shakespearean references now come thick and fast, Juliet musing, from a high pedestal above her unseen paramour, 'Gnomeo, Gnomeo, […] why must you wear a blue hat, why couldn't it be red?' Nanette, similarly, ushers Gnomeo away with a flirtatious 'goodnight sweet prince', and 'parting is such sweet sorrow'.

These examples, though, foreground that which the playtext claims will happen, but do not yet suggest ways in which this particular adaptation might subvert that foreknowledge. Such an exploitation of this foreknowledge only occurs when Gnomeo meets the font of said foreknowledge, Shakespeare. When Gnomeo is swept away from the gardens in a mid-film fight with his red enemies he is transported to a park. There he talks to a giant statue of Shakespeare. This statue is introduced through a close-up of the Bard's name inscribed onto a plaque, again foregrounding the *discours*-like status of the source narrative, in this case literally carved in stone. As in the blue and red gardens, in the park the inanimate becomes animate. Voiced by the Shakespearean-coded voice of Patrick Stewart, the Bard remarks that Gnomeo's problems are reminiscent of one of his plays, which ends in the tragedy of Romeo

arriving too late to save Juliet's life. Gnomeo argues that such a conclusion sounds 'rubbish. There's gotta be a better ending than that!' Shakespeare's response accepts that an alternate ending is conceivable – 'I suppose that he [Romeo] could have made it back in time to avert disaster… But, I like the whole death part better'. Gnomeo argues that he is sure all will work out for him, but a plastic flamingo from his garden suddenly arrives to tell him that 'Juliet's in danger.' 'Told you so', says Shakespeare, sure that his foreknowledge of this adaptation will come to fruition. To Gnomeo's declaration 'I've got to get back to Juliet and save her', Shakespeare delivers the foreknown and *discours*-like riposte 'that's what *he* said, but she was dead before he got home.' The defiant Gnomeo expresses the seamlessness of cinema's non-foreknown *histoire* with a dramatic 'we'll see about that'. The figure of Shakespeare here closely combines the film's two metadramatic manipulations of anomalous perception. His is the voice of tragic inevitability – the written text, with its foretelling immutability carved into stone at the base of his statue, given voice and movement. And the diegetically mobile Shakespeare statue also reflexively manipulates the medium's illusion of movement operating at both the perceptual/ontological and narrative levels.

The scene's anomalous tension between foreknown *discours* and unknown *histoire* will eventually be resolved, but not before an explosion in the gardens produces a cut to the statue of Shakespeare in the park, who looks over his shoulder at the distant mushroom cloud and repeats his foreknowing statement, 'told you so'. The explosion, however, is part of the final fight between blues and reds which settles the question of the film's anomalous foreknowledge and fulfils Metz's claim that 'the very principle of [realism's] effectiveness as *discours,* is precisely that it […] masquerades as *histoire*' (544). As a result of the explosion the couple are buried under a tomb-like mound of earth, suggesting that the foreknown tragic ending has indeed come to pass. In their grief Gnomeo's mother (Maggie Smith) and Juliet's

father (Michael Caine) bury their strife, vowing that their feud is over. But Gnomeo's *histoire*-like confidence that Shakespeare's tragic ending could be overcome is at last assured, as the couple eventually emerge from the earth. As the formerly antagonistic clans unite in celebration, and the couple ride a lawnmower towards a heart-shaped arch of hedge Gnomeo again expresses the pleasures of *histoire*'s seamless triumph over the foreknown; 'I don't know about you, but I think this ending is much better'.

Linking these manipulations of foreknowledge with the mobility of the doubly immobile directly thematises not only anomolous suspense, but also suggests the allegorisation of cinema's most basic ontological visual processes. Even if humans have a memory of having seen something before, we are still hardwired to respond with suspense under the right conditions. The same applies to cinematic vision, which 'consist[s] of single frames, but we can't see them in projection; we see a moving image' (Bordwell 4, my pagination). Manipulating the inanimateness, or otherwise, of supposedly inanimate objects echoes the visual trick of projecting static images, and the same visual trick applies to the way the human brain processes the foreknown. *Gnomeo and Juliet* exploits these two allied elements of cognitive impenetrability, manipulating cinema's most basic and most ontological visual processes. Both of these elements exploit the brain's modular distinctions between automated and conscious perceptual responses.

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