

Deixis and the Linguistic Anthropology of Cinema

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Abstract: As a contribution to what I call a linguistic anthropology of cinema, this article explores the question of deixis in linguistic and cinematic semiosis, detailing some of the semiotic functions and processes common to both. In particular, I focus on what Michael Silverstein has discussed as metapragmatic calibration types and the ways they intersect and play off of each other in South Indian fictional film. Drawing on an analysis of the poetics of a particular scene in the 1997 commercial Tamil film, *Arunachalam*, the narration of its uptake by one of the film's actresses, and my own ethnographic work on the Tamil cinema, I show how the multiple, simultaneous calibrations of deixis in the scene work to performative effect. While film semiotics has long taken linguistic models to think about filmic form (viz. "film language"), this analysis suggests the way in which an ethnographic analysis of cinematic discourse, on and off the screen, contributes to a more encompassing linguistic anthropological analysis of linguistic and cinematic semiosis.

Keywords: deixis; cinema; performativity; metapragmatics; linguistic anthropology; Tamil Nadu

Introduction

This article is an exercise in a *linguistic anthropology of cinema*. The phrase, linguistic anthropology of cinema, may strike the reader as odd. Linguistic anthropology, baptized as such by Dell Hymes (1964) in the 1960s, was named for the entangled space from which disciplinary linguistics and sociocultural anthropology split and came into being across mid-twentieth-century North America—namely, as the anthropological study of

language in/and culture. But if linguistic anthropology is a kind of study of *language* (in its putatively not-only-linguistic socio-cultural context), what might the phrase “linguistic anthropology of *cinema*” denote? (It is not, as will become clear, the anthropological study of speech in films.)

By being critically engaged with, and ambivalently situated between, linguistics and sociocultural anthropology, linguistic anthropology has made its interventions by, on the one hand, arguing that social life can't be thought of independently of the workings of language; and, on the other hand, by arguing against any account of language that would excise social and cultural context (however construed). On this view, the linguistic is always shot through with, and characterizable by, precisely those semiotic grounds (iconicity and indexicality) and aspects (sensuousness, materiality, force) that the (ideological) focus on language as abstract, symbolic representational system obscures. One result of these arguments has been the erosion of the sui generis autonomy of that object “language” and a critique of its utility for a holistic study of discourse, society, or culture (Silverstein 2005; Fleming 2020). This has pushed the field toward a more expansive account of language: on the one hand, to the ways in which the linguistic is always entangled with and constituted by, even as it is ideologically purified from, the non-linguistic (in particular, through the mediation of indexical practice); and thus, on the other hand, to those semiotic functions that, while well evidenced by linguistic semiosis, are at play in any number of media and modalities of semiosis (Keane 2003; Mertz 2007; Gal and Irvine 2019).¹ Which is to say, ultimately linguistic anthropological inquiry has attempted to base itself less on “language” as its foundational object of study (Nakassis 2016b) than on articulating a space beyond “language” precisely through a study of it(s) limits.² Indeed, all the theoretical innovations and analytic terms developed by linguistic anthropologists—indexicality, metapragmatics, ideology, entextualization, enregisterment, stance, voicing, genre, et cetera—have been forged out of the study of linguistic discourse (and, in particular, as critiques of structuralist, formalist accounts of “language”) while at the same time being *necessarily* generalizable to any number of media. There is a strange, generative irony in this (Nakassis 2018).

If this is so—namely, that linguistic anthropology has empirically and methodologically grown itself in the weeds of Language while articulating a horizon of theoretical discourse fallen beyond its Garden—then the question arises how the unique insights of linguistic anthropology might be brought to bear to think about those functions and processes beyond language in diverse media, be it houses (Keane 1995), digital sound (Eisenlohr 2010), the Internet (Gershon 2012), potable liquids (Manning 2012), algorithms (Kockelman 2013), painting (Chumley 2016), furniture (Murphy 2016), money (Agha 2017), photography (Ball 2017), puppets (Barker 2019), or, as I am concerned to do here, cinema (Worth 1969; Worth and Adair 1972; Meek 2006; Hardy 2014; Bucholtz 2011; Gershon and Malitsky

2011; Hardy 2014; Kirk 2016; Nakassis 2017, 2019, n.d.). But not simply applying the advances of linguistic anthropological methodology, analysis, or theory to cinema (or painting, or ...), as linguistic anthropology it is important that any such analysis be concerned with how taking cinema (or furniture, or ...) as our object of analysis elucidates the general workings of semiotic mediation tout court, including in “language.” It is in this light that I use the phrase *linguistic anthropology of cinema*.³

The catachresis of this phrase bears an uncannily familiarity, perhaps, for film studies scholars. Academic film studies founded itself, in part, by asking this very question of how to think the study of language and film together, posing this question at the hey-day of the structuralist linguistic turn in the 1960s and 1970s, a turn pioneered by French scholars such as Christian Metz and Raymond Bellour, British scholars such as Stephen Heath and Peter Wollen, among many others, such as Juri Lotman and Umberto Eco (cf. Worth 1969; Worth and Adair 1972 for related projects within visual communication in anthropology). In a sense, I want to return to the question these scholars raised as to what a phrase like “film language” might mean, though not in the way in which such structuralist film scholars invoked it, analogizing the advances in structuralist linguistics to language to ask about whether we can find something like *langue* in film. The problem, as Metz (1974[1971], 1991[1971]) and others quickly realized, was that the analogy fails because film is not like language insofar as language is like *langue*. This is, as I suggested above, precisely the argument linguistic anthropologists were arguing at this time as well: namely, that linguistic discourse is not like language insofar as language is reduced to *langue* (cf. Davidson 1986:157). If the project of elucidating “film language” failed, then, it was precisely because of the problematic, blinkered conceptualization of language it was using (Bateman and Schmidt 2012:17, 27–33, 129; also see Feld et al. and Ball et al. in this special issue). Missing from both structuralist film studies and linguistics was precisely the question of indexicality and all that it implies (eventhood, reflexivity, entextualization, interdiscursivity, etc.).

The small but central part of this larger problem—namely, of how to conceptualize “film language,” or rather, cinematic semiosis (cf. Metz 1974[1971]) and its proper study—upon which I want to focus in this article is the question of *deixis*. Deixis has attracted much attention in linguistic anthropology—and, to a lesser extent, linguistics—as the primary site of indexicality “in” “language.” It has also been taken up by film studies scholars interested in Émile Benveniste’s (1973[1966], 2014[1970]) turn to “enunciation” (e.g., Cassetti 1998[1986]; Metz 2016[1991]; Gaudreault 2009[1999]) as a way beyond their own impasses with structuralism. Deixis, as a common object of concern, thus, allows us to open a dialogue between film studies and linguistic anthropology while elucidating an account that can deal with semiosis across such media.

Below I discuss some of what linguistic anthropologists have had to say about deixis as a way to return to my own materials and point about cinema—and the Tamil cinema of South India in particular—and what it reveals about indexicality, deixis, and linguistic semiosis. Cinematic deixis, as we see, renders with clarity certain features of indexicality that—while seemingly contingent and secondary in linguistic analysis—can, and should, be seen as necessary and primary to indexicality (and thus deixis) as a sign function. First, I discuss linguistic deixis and its analysis within linguistic anthropology. In particular, I focus on the concept of metapragmatic calibration as one way to account for the way in which deictic signs function. I then turn to the question of cinematic deixis by asking what is the value/referent of an indexical sign (like “I” or “you,” a gesture or a look, a camera shot or a camera movement, et cetera) when enacted onscreen? Drawing on the semiotic account developed in previous sections, I address this question by detailing the complex ways deictic and indexical signs in cinema project into and beyond the narrating and narrated worlds of their occurrence. To show this, I work through the poetics and uptake of a particular scene in a commercial Tamil fictional film, *Arunachalam* (1997, dir. Sundar C). I show how the auratic *presence* of the film’s hero-star, and the cosmological and ontic worlds he anchors, performatively project on and beyond the screen in potent ways. This example, I suggest, helps us theorize the complex semiotic structuration of indexicality and deixis, be it in cinema, in “language,” or beyond.

Deixis and Metapragmatics

Linguistic Deixis

All known so-called natural languages contain deictics, signs like *I* and *you* (personal pronouns), *this* and *that* (demonstratives), *here* and *now* (spatial and temporal adverbs), as well as tense markers (e.g., V[erb]-Ø vs. V-ed for simple “present” and “past” in English), evidentials, and the like. Such form classes are what Roman Jakobson (1981[1957]) called “duplex” signs or “shifters,” after Otto Jespersen (1922).⁴ Linguistic deictics are duplex in that they are *indexical symbols*, to use the Peircean terms that Jakobson picked up and Michael Silverstein (1976) elaborated: they are *legisigns*, or general types, that stipulate a rule of use vis-à-vis a token-instance of the type (namely, the uttered deictic in question) in an (indexical) act of reference that, in some measure, semantically (symbolically) characterizes its denotatum.

A common short-hand for explaining deictics is to say that they are context-dependent signs; that is, that their meaning depends on the context of their use: *I* refers to me when *I* say it, but to you when you say it, just as *now* refers to the particular moment of its utterance, distinct with each iteration. Like all indexical signs, thus, deictics are in some kind of real or implied contiguity or co-presence with the semiotic objects to which they “point” (Peirce CP 2.306, CP 2.243, CP 2.287).⁵ As far as short-hands go, this account is fine; but ultimately there is something rather problematic about it—for what is *context*

(Duranti and Goodwin 1992; Silverstein 1992; Manning 2001; Hanks 2005)? And *which* context? Further, what is a *use*? And what is *co-presence* or *contiguity*? None of these things are self-evident, nor a-semiotic, which means that the pragmatic meaning of a deictic sign—and by extension, all indexical signs (which is to say, all signs in some way or another)—can't simply appeal, except as a short-hand, to such concepts (Nakassis 2017, 2018).⁶

In recognition of this complexity, linguistic anthropologists have striven to articulate a broad, holistic account of how deictic signs do their work without simply relying on the trivial, but also true (and profound) observation that “context matters” (e.g., Silverstein 1976, 2004; Hanks 1990, 2005; Grenoble 1998; Agha 2007; Goodwin 2018). In furtherance of such work (if with contrastive emphasis), what I highlight from this discussion is the fact that what defines deictics is less that they are dependent on their context of use or even that they constitute their contexts in and by their use than *the necessary possibility that they can lose their contexts of use and be grafted to other contexts in and across their happenings* (Derrida 1988; Nakassis 2013a, 2013b). Such necessary possibilities are clearest perhaps in phenomena such as reported speech constructions or, more generally, what Mikhail Bakhtin (1982) called *voicing* in narrative (also Vološinov 1973[1929]) and what Goffman (1981) called *footings* in interaction ritual (Agha 2005).⁷

The principles that such ubiquitous phenomena evince hold true for all deixis, and this is what is key for us: namely, that the objects of deictics are *not* necessarily part of the “context” of the event of their happening. Rather, as a function of *other* signs—their co-text (Silverstein and Urban 1996)—the indexical values of such forms can be “shifted” away from their “immediate” context to *other* contexts, to other events, to other fields.⁸ Hence, to take a simple example, when one quotes another—“He said, ‘I would rather be nowhere else than here’”—“I” doesn’t refer to the speaker (but to whomever “he” denotes), nor does “‘here’” refer to where this report was uttered (but to wherever what it reported was uttered).

Not all acts of deixis, of course, are so-shifted. But the point is that this possibility of shifting is *necessarily* so: all deictics can be decentered and recentered and traverse multiple contexts (Briggs and Bauman 1992). *This is what defines them*. Not exceptions to the question of deixis or extensions of its basic design, *such effects are its rule*.⁹ What are the implications of this? And how are to best account for such capacities and effects?

Metapragmatic Calibration

To pursue these questions, let us return to the notion that deictics both seemingly “encode” some trans-contextual content and are context dependent, that is, are meaningful only relative to their status as symbolic legisign and indexical sinsign. To the

first: as William Hanks (1990, 1992) and Asif Agha (1996, 2007) have suggested, deictics bring to bear both a *semantic schema* of their denotatum—which is often quite underdetermined and minimal (Manning 2001), and thus rather flexible—and an *interactional schema*, or topos, of some event of use. Together, these schemata function as a reflexive (i.e., metasemiotic) sketch of the happening of the sign vis-à-vis its denotatum and those party to the event of reference. Such schemata, as Hanks (1992) notes, invoking Karl Bühler, are anchored by some indexical *origo*, a zero-point or contextual variable from which the referent of the deictic is calculated once it is, itself, anchored to some particular event and its “deictic field” (Hanks 2005; Edwards 2012, 2017; also Grenoble 1998:28–29). It is also relative to this origo that the interactional sketch of the sign’s happening is mapped—for example, that some spatial region is denoted as *proximal to* or *inclusive of speaker*, as in the English deictic “here.” The question for us is: How are the first and second related to each other? That is, how is the symbolic schema of the deictic—its semantic characterizability conditions and its interactional schema—anchored to some *particular* indexical origo or another?¹⁰ How are we to know in *which* field a deictic traffics?¹¹ Or to use different terms, how is the metasemiotic sketch projected by the deictic form pragmatically realized?

Michael Silverstein (1993) has introduced the term *metapragmatic function* for this mapping question (Quine [1968] called it a “background language”), arguing that every indexical sign, in order to signify, must be metapragmatically regimented by some such function, a frame—as Bateson (1972[1955]) and, after him, Goffman (1974) called it—with respect to which the sign’s value(s) can be realized; and this, precisely because indexical signs are, as I suggested, fundamentally *underdetermined*, not outside of a “context” but outside of a metasemiotic that would specify in *which* event and with respect to *which* frame of indexical value (or reference; Grenoble 1998; Hanks 2005) the sign is to be realized in, or rendered relative to.

Such functions are many in type, ranging from grammatical code to denotationally metapragmatic lexis and clause dependence and control relations (as in quotative constructions), to the poetics of linguistic and non-linguistic co-text, as well as to questions of genre, register, language ideologies, “social fields” (Hanks 2005), and so on. Across such different types of metapragmatics, any of which may be at play at any particular time, Silverstein (1993, in press) provides us with terms for three *calibration types*, that is, three ways in which a particular metapragmatic sign—an indexical sign that typifies or regiments the pragmatics of its semiotic object—is related to what it points to, characterizes, typifies, and regiments; which is also to say, three ways in which a deictic’s trans-contextual metapragmatic schema is articulated to some particular event structure (Table 1).

		Coincident	Co-eval
<i>Reflexive</i>	Metapragmatic sign calibrated to event of its happening (co-incident of signaling/signaled event)	+	(+)
<i>Reportive</i>	Metapragmatic sign calibrated to event different from event of its happening (non-coincidence, co-evality of signaling/signaled event)	-	+
<i>Nomic</i>	Metapragmatic sign calibrated to no particular event (non-coincidence, non-co-evality of signaling/signaled event)	(-)	-

Table 1. Metapragmatic Calibration Types; after Silverstein 1993

Calibration Types, 1, 2, 3

To briefly review Silverstein's (1993, in press) discussion, there are three basic types of calibration: *reflexive*, *reportive*, and *nomic*.

(1) *Reflexive calibration*, as we've already had occasion to see, denotes the case where the deictic's value is anchored to, and metapragmatically frames, the event of its own happening, and thus where the realization/saturation of its origo is co-incident with its own enunciation; hence, reflexive. For example, if, in uttering, "I would rather be nowhere else than here," "I" does, indeed, refer to the speaker of the token *I* as the speaker of that particular *I* in the event of so-uttering it,¹² we are talking about the reflexive metapragmatic calibration of the deictic. This case, as already noted, has typically been treated as the default, transparent "meaning" of the deictic form itself, though we might better see such cases as being where the surrounding (reflexively calibrating) co-text of the deictic in question converges upon just such an interpretation (i.e., entextualization), such that all other signs—at any number of scales, all the way up to the "social field"—are congruent with, or don't contravene, just such a construal (Hanks 2005; Agha 2007). In such cases, context withdraws itself, seemingly *into* the deictic, as the deictic presents itself as transparently and directly pointing to its object. This is the realm, we might note, of what Benveniste (1973[1966]) called *discours*, a putatively primordial scene of you-s and I-s exchanged in face-to-face conversation, in contrast to what he called *histoire*, the realm of reportively and nomically calibrated semiosis discussed below.

(2) *A reportive calibration*, by contrast to a reflexive calibration, is the case where the deictic regiments or typifies—and is often anchored in—some indexed event *which is not coincident* with the event of its happening but is in some common spatiotemporal envelope with it. Reported speech constructions are a prototypical example. To reuse our

previous example: “He said, ‘I would rather be nowhere else than here’” (alternatively, in so-called indirect discourse: “He said that he would rather be nowhere else than there”). Here, the deictics in question mediate an interdiscursive relationship between discrete, but relatable events: the event of uttering “I would rather be nowhere else than here” and an event of reporting that utterance (“He said [that] ‘...’”). Note that in the case of so-called direct discourse, such reportive calibrations create “shifts” in, or decenterings of, the indexical origo of so-regimented deictics;¹³ in such cases, tokens of deictic categories like tense, mood, and personal pronouns are calculated and rendered relative to—that is, their origo is projected onto/from—some *other* event distinct from the event of narrating. Consider again our example, slightly complexified:

Austin_x, I_{sp} *think*_{Te}, said_{Tn<Tsp} at the end of his_x lecture at Harvard_y something like “I_x would rather be nowhere else than here_y.”

Here, I indicate the reflexively calibrated deictics with *italics*, the reportively calibrated deictics with underlining, and the shifted deictics (also reportively calibrated) in blue font; subscripts are used to track co-reference (x = Austin, y = Harvard, sp = speaker) and indicate the time of the narrating event (Tsp), narrated event (Tn), and their temporal ordering (<, i.e., pastness).

(3) The third calibration type is what Silverstein calls, after Whorf (1956[1939]), *nomic calibration*—wherein the narrating event is neither coincident nor co-eval with the narrated event that it metapragmatically indexes. In such a calibration, the origo (and referent) of the deictic is located, in a sense, nowhere and everywhere, certainly not exclusively in the event, or even epistemic realm, of the sign’s happening nor in some other stipulated (token-)event. If reflexive calibration is immanent to the event it regiments and reportive calibration an interdiscursive relation of distinctness between events, nomic calibration involves an absence of both (Silverstein 1993:40). For example, “Lectures are nice to give at Harvard.” (Note the simple present of the verb *to be* with unmarked aspect, mood, and voice; the generic, universally quantifying plural; the subjectless infinitive verb phrase, all of which figure a general truth independent of the event of speech or any other particular such event.) Under such conditions, deictics asymptotically negate their own indexicality; or, to use a distinction Asif Agha (2007:44) has introduced: in such configurations the signs in question are maximally *deictically non-selective*, bleached of their indexical grounding in any *particular* event or context. Such a calibration type is the realm of universal statements (like our example), mythic narratives (and perhaps all fictional narrative, as I suggest below) and their ontically distinct realms (Eisenlohr 2004:94), as well as Austinian (1962) performatives and Durkheimian (1995[1912]) rituals of all types (Silverstein 2004). In all such cases, transcendent norms or laws and social

values are rendered present in some here-and-now of their happening (which they, in their seemingly universal scope, may also, and often do, metapragmatically regiment).

Such metapragmatic calibration types, in short, describe three non-mutually exclusive ways in which a deictic (or any metapragmatic indexical) is related to the pragmatic phenomena it points to, characterizes, or regiments.

Metapragmatics of Metapragmatics

Notice that because every metapragmatic is itself semiotic (in particular, an indexical semiotic), it is itself regimented by some metapragmatics. As such, the calibration type of some metapragmatic sign (how and what it regiments) *depends* upon how it itself is metapragmatically regimented by some other (meta)metapragmatics. Every reportively calibrated metapragmatics, for example, as Silverstein (1993:51–52) points out, is itself (residually) reflexively calibrated, just as every nomic calibration implies and is woven out of reportive calibrations and instated vis-à-vis some reflexive calibration (Fleming 2011). Indeed, the reflexive calibration of the reported speech construction discussed above—with its past-tense metapragmatic verb (“said”) licensing a subordinate clause (“I would rather be...”), and so on—is the very basis from which we can calculate the co-reference of the “I” in the subordinate clause with the proper name, “Austin,” in the matrix clause, as distinct from the “I” in the matrix clause, denoting speaker of the narrating utterance.

We may also reason in reverse: that the possibility of a reflexive calibration (say, a linguistic deictic like a personal pronoun) depends upon being socialized into its usage across a history of events—in which any particular “I” is taken as a citation to, or voicing of, previous usages (Urban 1989; Butler 1993)—relative to some nomically regimenting grammatical code (here, English) and social field (e.g., Ivy-league academia filled with hosted guest lecturers, norms of politesse and deference to hosts, and so on) which renders any particular token-instance intelligible and pragmatically meaningful. Part of what this means, as we see examples of below (in particular, in the second half of the article regarding the multimodal poetics, genre features, and ontologies of the image at play in a particular scene from the Tamil film *Arunachalam*), is that metapragmatic signs may be calibrated in more than one way at once and that calibration types are not mutually exclusive. Rather, they are in necessary relations with each other, indeed, are built up out of each other.¹⁴

As every regimenting metapragmatics is itself metapragmatically regimented in some way, there are three-by-three possible combinations.¹⁵ While I do not explore all of all the possibilities therein, I offer some brief commentary below to elucidate some of the implications of such combinatorics (also see Silverstein in press), with a specific eye to certain combinations that will be of importance when we turn to questions of deixis and

metapragmatics in the cinema in the next section of the article (e.g., explicit primary performativity, rigid designation, fiction).

(Meta)metapragmatics_i (MP_i) Metapragmatics_i (MP_i)

{i. reflexively,
ii. reportively,
iii. nomically}

Metapragmatics_i (MP_i) Pragmatic event (PE)

{1. reflexively,
2. reportively,
3. nomically}

Regimenting (Meta)metapragmatics (MP _i)					
		i. Reflexive	< ii. Reportive >	< iii. Nomic >	
Regimented Metapragmatics (MP ₁), regimenting Pragmatic event (PE)	1. Reflexive	(1i) (Prototypic) Deixis Congruent text-in-context “I” = speaker of “I” PE _{sp} = “I _{sp} ...”	(1ii) Citation/renvoi (token-sourced, extra-event) E _{1, sp1} = “...” → E _{2, sp2} = “I _{sp2, #sp1} ...”	(1iii) Register (type-sourced) Cultural value _{MPi} → text-in-context/pragmatic paradigms _{MPi} (e.g., <i>tu</i> vs. <i>vous</i>)	<i>Poetics/</i> <i>Entextualization</i> ∃eFx (event-singular/internal)
	∨ ∧ 2. Reportive	(2i) Mimesis/citation (intra-event) Poetics _{MPi} → reportive _{MPi} Sp ₁ : I _{sp1} am tired. Sp ₂ : “I _{sp1} am tired.”	(2ii) Reported Speech (extra-event) Event _{MPi} → reportive _{MPi} [He _x said] _{MPi} that [he _x was tired] _{MPi} . [He _x said] _{MPi} : [“I _x am tired”] _{MPi} .	(2iii) Genred narrative Genre _{MPi} → [narrative “...”] _{MPi} Figure(animator): “ <u>I</u> _{fig, #animator} ...”	<i>Interdiscursivity</i> ∃e ₁ ∃e ₂ F(x, y) (relation between events)
	∨ ∧ 3. Nomic	(3i) Ritual poetics Poetics _{MPi} → nomic _{MPi}	(3ii) Explicit primary performativity [[<u>I promise</u>] _{MPi} to come tomorrow] _{MPi} .	(3iii) Ideology (qua discourse, implicit belief) “ <u>Promises are important</u> ”	<i>Emanation</i> ∀eFx (for all events)
		<i>Poetics/entextualization</i> ∃eFx (event-singular/internal)	<i>Interdiscursivity</i> ∃e ₁ ∃e ₂ F(x, y) (relation between events)	<i>Emanation</i> ∀eFx (for all events)	

Shifted/decentered origo (exclusive of utterance-event)
Detached/immanent origo (inclusive of utterance-event)

NB: Every nomic metapragmatics (MP) presupposes (<) a reportive MP;
every reportive MP presupposes (<) a reflexive MP; and vice versa.

Table 2. Meta(meta)pragmatic calibration of metapragmatic calibration types

NB: The top part of the table graphically diagrams relations of regimentation—as indicated by arrows—between meta(meta)pragmatics and their ([meta]pragmatic) objects (MP_i and MP₁, MP₁ and PE); possible combinations of intersecting calibration types (columns MP_i x rows MP₁ with reflexive, reportive, nomic values) are laid out with examples provided in each table cell. Supplementary information right below each column and to the right of each row indicate the event structure involved: intra-discursive (*entextualization*), inter-discursive (*circulation*), supra-discursive (*emanation*; see Silverstein 2013 on this trichotomy); supplementary information below the table gives a key for shifted (solid red underline) and detached (dotted red underline) origos, as well as the relations of immanence and inclusion (<) between calibration types.

(Click <https://www.semioticreview.com/attachments/Nakassis/Table2.jpg> to enlarge.)

Table 2 depicts the intersection of two metapragmatics, one—the top-most row, MP_i—that regiments another—the left-most column, MP₁—which itself regiments some pragmatic event (PE). The prototypic reflexive, reportive, and nomic calibrations, as discussed above, are located along the top-left to bottom-right diagonal.¹⁶ It is important to again keep in mind that while the table suggests clearly separable kinds, this is a misleading illusion that glosses over the relations of immanence, co-implication, and

multiplicity (blending), as well as varying ratios (or “dominants”), among these different calibration types.

Working down the first column are cases where some reflexively regimenting metapragmatics enables the so-regimented metapragmatic to be calibrated to (i.e., itself regimenting of) some pragmatic event in some way: reflexively, reportively, or nomically. In this column we are concerned with how the reflexive calibration of poetics/entextualization serves as a(n implicit) meta(meta)pragmatic function (MP_i). This contrasts with the second column, where the regimenting meta(meta)pragmatics is a different event than what it regiments.

1i. *Prototypical deixis*. Cases of “literal” deixis involve situations where the (reflexively calibrated) poetics of co-text (MP_i) regiment the deictic in question (MP_1), such that it reflexively typifies the event of its own happening (PE). These are cases, as discussed above, where “I” denotes speaker of the token “I.”

2i. *Mimesis/citation* (intra-event). In such citational acts, the poetics of MP_i entail a reportive calibration of MP_1 , as with echoic mimesis across turns of semiotic activity. All citational acts are reportively calibrated (this is what we mean by calling them citational), whether or not they are explicitly or locally so marked (Nakassis 2013a). Indeed, their reflexive calibration qua poetics may function precisely to this effect. Consider the game played by some children of sarcastically echoing the last statement made by the person they are thereby trying to annoy:

A: Shut up!

B: Shut up! <in annoying voice, accompanying facial gestures, etc.>

A: You are an idiot!

B: You are an idiot! <in annoying voice, etc.>

Every second pair-part is a citation of the first, its so-framing a function of being an echoic, mocking utterance which, by degrees, decenters the deictics in question (Tannen 1987).¹⁷ Here, poetic structure (parallelism), phonemic style, and prosody function as the reflexively calibrated marks that put the utterance into a reportive calibration vis-à-vis the first pair-parts (Couper-Kuhlen 1996).

We can contrast cases of 2i with 1ii, where across reportively calibrating events some *renvoi/citation* is effected—as in, say, plagiarism.¹⁸ In such a case, the reportive calibration regiments the pragmatic event in question without decentering the reflexively calibrated reference of the deictics. Hence, when Melania Trump allegedly plagiarized Michelle Obama in her 2016 Republican National Convention speech, Mrs. Trump’s “I”-s

did not refer to the former First Lady, even if their citational relation did cast a certain metapragmatic pall over Mrs. Trump's discourse for those who saw the interdiscursive relation (Krieg et al. 2016). Both 2i and 1ii differ from *reported speech* (2ii), where an interdiscursive, reportive calibration through explicit metapragmatic discourse (verbs of speech) decenters deictic reference beyond the narrating event.

3i. *Ritual poetics*. Ritual parallelism and the like involve cases where the poetics in play participate in effecting a nomic calibration of the pragmatic event in question. They are a well-known anthropological phenomenon (e.g., Fox 1974; Galaty 1983; Perrino 2002; Fleming and Lempert 2014). *Explicit primary performatives* (3ii), by contrast, are cases wherein a nomic calibration (MP₁) of the pragmatic event is achieved through the reportive frame (MP_i)—in English, reported speech construction of matrix and subordinate clauses—often licensed by a deictically non-selective configuration of a metapragmatic verb (a *verbum dicendi* in unmarked tense, mood, voice) and entailing of a subordinate-clause proposition, as brought to bear on reflexively calibrated person deictics that prototypically denote the PE's participants (as in “I promise you I will pay you back”; also see discussion of rigid designation below). Needless to say, in ritual, both performatives and ritual poetics play their parts together.

1iii. *Register*. Working down the right-most column of nomicallly regimenting meta(meta)pragmatics (MP_i) we begin with *register phenomena*. Register phenomena—such as registers of speech (e.g., legalese, youth slang, etc.)—are cultural schemas of value that are enactable through the non-referential indexicality of signs of various sorts (Agha 2007). A register consists of a repertoire of signs united in the metapragmatic values and stereotypes (e.g., of context type, speaker identity, etc.) that such signs indexically invoke/instantiate. Important for our point here is that register phenomena are virtual, nomicallly regimenting metapragmatics (i.e., conventional normativities) governing the enacted repertoires which bear them (Silverstein in press). As such, they enable signs of various kinds, be they linguistic or otherwise, to reflexively typify the event of their happening (hence their enactability).

2iii. *Genred narrative*. In cases of 2iii, some schema of cultural value (MP_i)—such as a genre—entails a reportive calibration of the so-regimented metapragmatics (MP₁). Examples include when a parodist's words are detached from himself in voicing (i.e., animating) his parodied target (or Goffmanian figure), or when a Wolof griot speaks for a noble, as classically discussed by Judith Irvine (1974, 1996). In both cases, a nomicallly regimenting metapragmatics—a cultural template for semiotic activity—reportively calibrates a pragmatic event of indexical semiosis, (partially) shifting its voicing away from the context of its happening. (See Goffman 1974 for an extended discussion of such cases, wherein genres precipitate the separation of *animators*, *authors*, and *principals*; see

note 7.) Such cases slide into nomically calibrated texts, as with *fictional narrative*, an interesting liminal case I discuss below (represented in Table 2 as in between 2iii and 3iii).

3iii. Finally, in 3iii we have nomically calibrating/calibrated metapragmatics, as perhaps best represented in *ideology*—whether this be as implicit belief/habit or explicit discourse—and the institutions they animate (the domain of what Hanks [2005] calls “social fields”). Grammar similarly operates in this mode as a virtual nomic metapragmatics—as metasemantics, more specifically (Silverstein 1976)—that enables decontextualizable (nomically calibrated) propositional language. In both cases, some (virtual) institutionality/authority mediates the capacity of sign activity to itself nomically regiment semiosis, as with linguistic definitions (“promises are speech acts”) and moral dicta (“promises are important to honor”).

We might also consider signs like proper names—what Saul Kripke (1980) called *rigid designators*, for Žižek (1989), the “empty signifier” of ideology par excellence—as an interesting type of (tendentially) nomically regimenting/regimented calibration (see Fleming 2011). Rigid designators are signs whose referent is anchored by some putative baptismal event wherein the nominal sign-type is performatively stapled to a token-referent, whose contingent but now a priori identity is thereby fixed in the putatively originary ritual moment of nomination. As with other performatives, such ritual baptisms are, in prototypic English-language contexts, *reflexively* and **nomically** calibrated within a reportive frame, as in the following example:

“I _{sp}	<u>name-Ø</u>	<i>this</i>	ship	<u>‘the Queen Elizabeth’.</u> ”
1p.SING	<u>verbum dicendi</u> -PRES.ACT.INDIC.	<i>prox.demon.</i>	ship	<u>proper name</u>

Insofar as a rigid designator refers, this identity relation functions, Kripke tells us, as a self-same type across time, space, material transformation, indeed, across any “possible world” (i.e., semantic counterfactual). Such signs are indexical—since their value is relative to their baptismal context, as mediated by some interdiscursive speech chain that leads to the moment of becoming acquainted with the designator—but they are not (quite) shifters, since their value does not change across token-usage, which is also to say, they maintain their reference even within reported speech constructions, as Frege (1892) long ago pointed out. Hence, for those socialized to my name/person, “Constantine Valenzuela Nakassis” refers to Constantine Valenzuela Nakassis, whether you or I say it, or whether you know me as Costas or not.

But perhaps we might say that that rigid designators *are*, in fact, shifters of a sort, a limit case of deixis, one whose indexical origo is fixed to one and only one context *within any particular baptismal speech chain*; after all, as Judith Butler (1993) points out, one can

always catachrestically “shift” the indexical value of a rigid designator by rebaptizing it or grafting it to another chain. There could, after all, be *another* Constantine Valenzuela Nakassis (your pet rock, perhaps)—though there isn’t such a person (or rock) with such a name, I don’t think—that Constantine Valenzuela Nakassis versus yours truly, *this* one, *me*. (Note all the deixis necessary to baptismally recenter and disambiguate our hypothetical references, all rooted within reportively calibrated, interdiscursive speech chains mediated by inscribed text-artifacts such as the ink or pixels in front of you leading back to “*this*” moment of writing.)

Similarly, consider cases where a rigid designator functions like a mask to which various individuals are recruited to animate, as with a character in a play or film: say, James Bond or Hamlet; or as my daughters often do, trading the names of Disney princesses, “Now I am Elsa and you are Anna,” their interactions often involving short-lived if intensely negotiated performative baptisms inaugurating rigid designators that extend over and are exchanged across turns at play, but no longer. Other examples include titles of nobility (Duke of York, Princess of Wales, etc.), a Tsimshian name won (or lost) at a potlatch (Roth 2008), and so on. Each such rigid designator has its own particular textual and historical envelope of rigidity and shiftiness.¹⁹

It is worth emphasizing again that my aim in the above discussion is not to isolate pure types or categories but to clarify a set of relations and their interplay. Hence, it is clear, for example, that poetic structure on its own cannot constitute a ritual’s nomic calibration, since all such rituals depend upon a (nomic) cosmic order of belief (ideologies of various sorts), and upon prior (reportively calibrated) instances of ritual, and so on;²⁰ just as, as William Hanks (1990, 2005) has shown in detail, even seemingly “literal” acts of everyday deixis only appear so given the multiple, intersecting metapragmatic regimentations of them (also see Agha 1997:463), from their surrounding co-text to the “social fields” in which they are “embedded,” to the discourse genres within which they are used, and to interactants’ phenomenological habits.

From Linguistic to Cinematic Deixis

While the examples above have primarily concerned linguistic forms (pronouns, tense markers, demonstrative, adverbs, proper names, speech registers), my proposition is that, following my introductory comments, this discussion is not limited to linguistic deixis or discursive interaction. The distinctions I’ve raised so far are common to any number of media. Not just pronouns or pointing fingers, we can also consider cinematic deixis, things like camera placement and movement, sound design, and their indexical relationships to filmic *mis-en-scène*, post-production effects (see Lefebvre in this issue), and editing, to say nothing of non-filmic deictics which are part of films, like pronouns, gestures, and the like. (Indexicality, needless to say, here comprises much more than the

so-called “trace,” as much worried in film and photography studies; see Lefebvre and Ball et. al in this issue on this point.)

The film camera, and the gazes it encounters, represents, and enables, are deictic in precisely the ways we have been discussing—projecting a relational schema and characterizing its so-framed object from a decenterable, shiftable origo that looks, denotes, and addresses. As Edward Branigan (1984, 2006) has shown in detail, the camera names not a technology but the figuration and enactment of an origo of vision. From this origo of vision, a radial opening illuminates a horizon of visibility and entextualization, which it characterizes through its framing, angles, focus, coloring, lens-type, distance, effects (optical and post-production), movement, and which, by taking in some *mise-en-scène* (and composed scene) and being edited together with other such looks/openings, may come to be shifted and attributed to points-of-view other than itself (e.g., of characters, narrators, places; these being the filmic equivalent of Bakhtinian voicing). Such openings themselves are embedded within and enabled/mediated by particular narratives (denotational texts), intertextual relations, stylistic registers, genres, relative to various ideologies and located within various types of “social fields” (industrial, political, etc.), as we see in the next section.

To repeat: my aim is not to ask if we can find language-like things in the non-linguistic aspects of filmic texts, such as grammatical syntagma in film editing (Metz 1974[1971]) or personal pronouns in shot-types (Casetti 1998[1986]), as when scholars talk about first-person, second-person, or third-person shots (e.g., to describe the deictic quality of the camera discussed above). Rather, I am interested in the semiotic functions that are common between film and speech, if differentially expressed and manifested in them (cf. Metz 2016[1986]); in the instance, the play of metapragmatic calibration types as they mutually intersect each other through deictic forms. Language, as noted earlier, has long been of interest to those theorizing non-linguistic semiotic “systems” for this reason—namely, the claim that what is common to semiosis in general is uniquely and clearly expressed in language in particular. The question before us is whether we can say the same for film—namely, whether film, and cinema more generally, manifest semiotic functions in ways that illuminate something about the non-filmic/cinematic, indeed, about linguistic semiosis.

My claim is that film and cinema are interesting because they make apparent what in language is often seen as contingent and latent though, I would suggest, is actually necessary and immanent; in particular, that deictic, cinematic signs are always potentially, and perhaps actually and even necessarily, calibrated and calibrating—reflexively, reportively, nomically—in multiple ways at once, if in varying degrees and in varying ratios and in multifunctional ways. We could—and already have—discussed examples to show

this in linguistic forms (e.g., the way in which second-person pronominal paradigms are frequently enregistered as honorifics through historical processes of interdiscursivity such that they can reflexively typify their addressee-referents). What I want to do in what follows, however, is to explore how this works in the case in commercial Tamil fictional film, our own ideologies about fictional narrative notwithstanding.

The nub of the issue is that fictional narrative film—as manifest in Tamil cinema in the late twentieth-century, though the point has a greater generality—involves at least three different event-relations, or “contexts,” each implied/encompassed by the others:

1. The relationship of the *exhibition-space* to what is depicted on a *screen*, which is to say, the happening of light projected onto a screen (or light emitted through a pixelated monitor or cathode-ray tube) for an audience (the event of screening);
2. The relationship of (1)—what is projected onto the screen in the event of its screening—to the *profilmic timespace* of shooting (the event of recording), that is, the inscription of the profilmic onto film, which in turn serves as an input for extra-profilmic processes such as editing, CGI effects, coloring, sound-mixing and mastering, printing/rendering, and so on (each of which must be considered as well, of course, though we won’t do so here);
3. The relationship of (2)—the relationship of the events of recording and screening—to the *diegesis* (the events of the narrative) and *its world* wherein people (“characters”) and things are acting and transacting, including speaking, gesturing, looking, touching, and emitting any number of other indexical and deictic signs.

In fictional film and other similar arts, the body and actions of a character in a narrative are always also related to the body and actions of an actor recorded on a set, and both are related to the body and actions projected on the screen to an audience. Each are potential “counterpart relations” to the others (Hanks 2005:201). When a deictic sign occurs, then, in which of these three event relations/structures is its value to hold? In which timespace is its target or referent specified? Is the sign reflexively calibrated to (i.e., does it typify and refer to something in) the event of screening? Is it reportively calibrated to the profilmic event of recording? Or to the narrative world? When an onscreen body looks to camera, who is looking, and at what/whom? Similarly, when an “I” is uttered onscreen, who is its speaker-referent? Is it the character in the diegesis, the actor then-and-there on the shooting spot, or—as we will see below—the star-actor here-and-now in the event of screening? Some combination thereof?

There is no one answer to any of these questions, and different genres and media cultures, different films and scenes, and even different viewers of the same scene or even the same person at different moments may answer these questions in different ways—indeed, ultimately, this question of deixis and calibration is a political issue to be struggled over (Nakassis 2017, 2019, 2020, n.d.). But in whatever configuration deixis appears—which is to say, in whatever way it is resolved in an instance of its entextualization—my

point is that all three calibration types are necessarily possible and can, and do, interact with each other in complex ways at one and the same time, and at multiple orders (regimenting/regimented). To consider this, let's look at a particular example from a 1997 Tamil film, *Arunachalam* (dir. Sundar C), and the uptake and metadiscourse surrounding it.

“*Ḍēy!*”: Metapragmatic Calibrations in *Arunachalam*

In August 2011 in Madurai, Tamil Nadu, after a long day of preliminary selections for the reality-television show, *Tamiḷ Pēsum Katānāyaki* ('A Tamil-speaking Heroine'; see Nakassis 2015), the three judges for the second round of the day's competition were convened at the auditorium of the hotel where the shooting was taking place: an up-and-coming hero Ashok Balakrishnan, the veteran actress, Vadivukkarasi, and myself. After exchanging greetings, Ashok deferentially but inquisitively asked Vadivukkarasi if it was true what he had heard: that after she acted in the 1997 film *Arunachalam*, a fan of the film's hero made her apologize for what transpired in a particular scene, and more specifically, for a single line that she uttered in it. She confirmed, launching into an abridged narrative of the incident, which I managed to take some hasty notes about afterwards. I later found her telling the story in an interview during her stint (again, as a judge) on the Vijay TV reality-television show “Super Singer” (Figure 1).²¹



Figure 1. Vadivukkarasi (b. 1952), re-enacting her role in *Arunachalam* (1997, dir. Sundar C.) on Vijay TV's “Super Singer” circa 2013

In the film, Vadivukkarasi (b. 1952) was cast as Vedhavalli, the grandmother of the film's titular character, the hero Arunachalam, played by the preeminent and massively popular hero-star of the Tamil industry, the “Super Star” Rajinikanth (b. 1950). When the director of *Arunachalam*, Sundar C. explained to Vadivukkarasi that her character—an eighty-five-year-old hunch-backed and embittered grandmother—would have to throw Rajini's character out of the family, she became afraid, she said. Just twelve years back, she had

acted in a minor role as Rajini’s sister-in-law in the film *Padikkadavan* (1985; dir. Rajasekhar). And in that film, she had also kicked Rajini’s character out of the house. For that minimal scene, as she reported in the television interview, she had been harassed by Rajinikanth’s fans for insulting their ‘leader’ (*talaivar*). What would happen in *Arunachalam*, she worried, where the scene in question was the major narrative turning point in which she would dramatically humiliate the hero and cast him out? So, when the writer of the film, “Crazy” Mohan (1952–2019) told her at the shooting spot her lines, she was quite upset and pleaded with him to change them.²² As she put it in another interview (Vandhana 2018): “I had to call Rajini an orphan. I appealed to everyone including Crazy Mohan and Vinu Chakravarthy [another actor in the film], but they brushed it off and told me to focus on my role.” Eventually, she acquiesced and they shot the scene.

(Arunachalam segment available for download here:

https://www.semioticreview.com/attachments/Nakassis/Arunachalam_segment_1997dirSundarC.mov.)

In the scene, Arunachalam’s brother refuses to marry his lover because of her lack of wealth and presumably lower-caste status, causing the village to convene to resolve the matter. In front of the whole village, the golden-son of the family, Arunachalam, righteously pledges his own share in the family property to the girl so as to protect her honor and force his brother to marry her. He says over the sound of the howling wind, in an off-axis, frontal tracking shot:

length (sec.)	shot-type		Tamil dialogue	English gloss
(1.9)	MED	tracking in	<i>Ippō solrēn.</i> (0.7)	I’m saying it now. (0.7)
			<i>Unakku maṭṭum ille.</i> (1.3)	And not just to you. (1.3)
(3.2)			<i>Ellārukkum solrēn.</i> (0.6)	I’m saying it to everyone. (0.6)
			<i>Namma sottule</i> (0.8)	(0.6) From our
	MCU		<i>enakku sēra veṇḍiya paṇku</i> (0.7)	property (0.8), the share that’s set aside for me (0.7)
(6.4)			<i>inta poṇṇukku eḍuttu koḍuttuṟēn.</i> (0.7)	I’m giving it to this girl (0.7)
			<i>Ḍēy.</i> (0.6)	<i>Ḍēy.</i> (0.6)
			<i>Ippa kaṭṭa tāliye!</i>	Now tie the wedding knot/necklace!

Transcript 1. Lead-in to the “ḌĒY!” segment of *Arunachalam* (1997, dir. Sundar C.; ~1:00:21–1:00:33)

NB: Shot length and type are indicated in the left-most columns, with camera movement annotated (MED = medium shot; MCU = medium close-up). Each line of the transcript represents one-second of screen time, with dialogue, screen-grabs, and annotation of camera movement aligned for onset. Pauses in speech are indicated in parentheses to the tenth of a second in the dialogue columns.

Immediately after Arunachalam’s imperative ‘Now tie the wedding knot,’ Vadivukkarasi’s character, Vedhavalli, enters the scene, screaming “*ḌĒY!*” (‘Hey!’). Her non-honorificating vocative/response cry is delivered in harsh voice quality and with a sustained (and relatively high) pitch contour (around G4, ~400Hz). This echoes and contrasts with Arunachalam’s previous utterance of “*Ḍēy*” in Transcript 1, delivered in a modal phonation, with a lower vowel frequency (around F4) and with a falling pitch-contour (dropping from 172Hz to 89Hz). Vedhavalli’s cry interrupts Arunachalam’s discourse and marks off a break with the preceding sequence and, indeed, with the entire narrative trajectory of the film theretofore. Vedhavalli goes on to complete the line that caused her to fret before and on the profilmic shooting spot, revealing that Arunachalam has no share to pledge because he is not actually their kin. The entire line is as follows:

ḌĒY! Yārōḍa sotte (.) yārukku yāru ṭā eḍuttu tarṛatu?

Hey! who-POSS. property-ACC. who-DAT. who-NOM. addr.term(-HON.) take-AVP give-PRES.NEUT.

Anāte payalē!

orphan child-EMPH./VOC.

‘Who the hell is taking and giving whose property to whom? You orphan child!’²³

Immediately after the take for the scene, Vadivukkarasi said in the television interview that the first person to “appreciate” her performance was Rajinikanth, who clapped for her on the shooting spot. Once *he* clapped, then the whole set (about twenty-five hundred people, she estimated) broke into applause. “As an artiste, I welcomed the appreciation,” she noted, “but I knew I was the one who would face the wrath of fans later” (Vandhana 2018). And she did, in the southern town of Dindugal.

Following a shoot for another film after *Arunachalam* released, Vadivukkarasi had boarded a Dindugal train to return to the city of Chennai. Time passed. The train didn’t leave. She wondered why not. Eventually the train’s ticket inspector came to her and asked her, specifically, to de-board. Had the production team improperly reserved her ticket, she wondered? As she found out, a man had laid down on the railroad track in front of the train, refusing to move, staking his life unless he got what he wanted, telling the train conductor: ‘Tell [-HON.] that woman to come and apologize! How could that woman call our [EXCL.] *talaivar* (‘leader’) an orphan?!’ (*Anta pombleye vantu manippu kēṭka sollu! Eṅka talavarai eppaḍi anta pomble anātai payalē nnu sollalām?!).* Vadivukkarasi got down from the train. And when she politely asked the man why *she* had to apologize, when Rajini’s onscreen male villains like Raghuvaran (1958–2008) do and say far worse to Rajini in fights, the fan responded: ‘If people like him [+HON.] pick a fight, our *talaivar* hits [+HON.]

back, right? But (in the film) he didn't give you [-HON.] any (blows) at all!' (*Avarellām saṇḍai pōṭṭā eṇka Talaivar tiruppi koḍuttiḍurār, le? Unakku koḍukkavē illai!*).²⁴

In order to placate the fan and get the train to leave the station, Vadivukkarasi asked him for forgiveness, hands pressed together in a traditional gesture of respect, supplication, and worship, performatively promising never to ever say one bad word about Rajinikanth again onscreen (or offscreen, by implication). Only after her apology did the fan allow the train to depart.

There are many questions that this example raises: first, why did this fan hold *the actress* responsible for her *character's* words? Put otherwise, why were her character's words an insult to the *actor* Rajinikanth (and thus, his fans, *the audience members*) and not just to his "counterpart" (Hanks 2005:201), his character, Arunachalam?²⁵ Which is also to say, why was this scene entextualized—that is, construed and taken up—as a performative act of insult, a personal act of discourse issued by Vadivukkarasi rather than a mere representation bracketed by its impersonal, fictional narrative—what Benveniste called *histoire*? And what, further, is the relationship between this performativity and the film's narrative, since the two—this fact of *discours* and this fact of *histoire*—are clearly not unrelated to each other, yet also not reducible to each other?

We can start to answer these questions by asking what are the grounds of—that is, what are the calibration types of—and relationships between the multiple indexical signs in this scene. This includes the deictics in Vadivukkarasi's utterance, the quality and loudness of her voice, the poetics of her speech, and her eye-gaze (as well as Rajini's). It also includes the scene's marks of filmic enunciation: the camera's angles, its movements (tilts, tracking, zooms), as well as editing effects (such as slow-motion) and musical accompaniment and sound design. To tease these out we need a closer analysis of the cross-modal poetics of this sequence. But we also need, as will become clear, an ethnographically informed analysis of the generic and ideological framing of this scene. In the following two sections I offer both.

Editing Pattern 1 (V/A/F//V/A/F)

Musical Theme 1
 V1: *DEY!* (1.1) *Yā soṭe yārakkū yāru dā edatti tarraṭu?* (0.7) *Andāe payale!* (3.4) *Father: Amma!*
 Hey! Who the hell is taking and giving whose property to whom? You orphan child! Mother!

Editing Pattern 2a (V/A//V/A)

Musical Theme 2
 V2: *Summa iru dā!* (0.8) *Inimē! ennālē poṇutukkamudiyātu!* (2.3) *En pēṭṭiye* (0.7) *ivanukku kaḷyana paṇṇi* (1) *A: pṇavē inta ire kiṭṭi (0.7) inta andāi yārum sollirappēn.* (1.5)
 Keep quiet! (0.8) I can't stand it any longer! You-[-] made a decision to marry my granddaughter to him[-]A. Right then I should've gathered the village and said who this orphan is.

Editing Pattern 2b (V/A//V/A//V/A//V...)

Musical Theme 2b cont.
 V11: *Ānā ippa* (1) *nī pēṭṭa paiyamukku* (1) *en pēramukku* (1.3) *oru vēlekkārappēṭṭa poṇṇe* (0.9) *Inukku mēl ennālē* (1.5) *De...*
 But now, to the boy you[-] fathered[-]A's brother), to my grandson, he's making a plan to marry a girl born to a servant? I can't stand it anymore!

Key:
 V = shot of Vedhavalli/Vadivukkarakasi;
 A = shot of Arunachalam/Rajinikanth;
 F = shot of Arunachalam's father/Vedhavalli's son;
 Shot numbers are indicated by sub-scripts.
 MLS = Medium Long-Shot;
 MED = Medium Shot;
 MCU = Medium Close-up;
 CU = Close-up;
 Lengths of shot-blocks are proportional to shot-length (see Figure 2). Camera-movements (zooms, tracking, etc.) are indicated by arrows and lines within shot-blocks, as well as by parallel lines connecting film stills.
 Pauses in dialogue are indicated by seconds in parenthesis.

Transition to Flashback

Musical theme 2b cont.
 V15: *Un amma yāru* (0.8) *nī enna jāti* (0.5) *un kulam* (0.5) *etunē teriyān(dā)!* (0.5) *Maṇṇattu varuṣattukku* (1) *ivanukku pṇṇe* (0.5) *koyil koyilā vēṇḍutal* (0.4)
 Who your mother is, what caste you are, your clan, ancestry, none of it is known! Thirty years ago because he didn't have a child we went from temple to temple supplicating (God).

Transcript 2. Multimodal Poetics of the “*DEY!*” segment of *Arunachalam* (1997, dir. Sundar C.; ~1:00:33–1:01:42). (Click

<https://www.semioticreview.com/attachments/Nakassis/Transcript2Nakassis.png> to enlarge.)

The Poetics of *Histoire/Discours*

This segment (Transcript 2) is bound off from two textual zones: (a) by a series of shots and dialogue exchanges between Arunachalam and his brother that precedes the segment (as discussed above; see Transcript 1), and (b) a flashback narrated by Vedhavalli that comes after the segment, in which she explains Arunachalam's orphanage.²⁶

Internally, this segment can be parsed into multiple overlapping poetic patterns that set it off from what precedes and follows it. In terms of the visual-track, there are three sections/editing patterns:

1. shots V₁–F₆,
2. shots V₇–A₁₆,
3. shot V₁₇,

the third of which (V₁₇) is a single shot that sets up and transitions into the flashback. The bulk of the segment—editing patterns 1 and 2—consist of alternating repetitions of shots, as indicated in Figure 2 below:

<... Arunachalam and Brother>
1. V₁ (0.8) / A₂ (rxn) (0.5) / F₃ (rxn) (0.3)
V₄ (5.0) / A₅ (rxn) (3.2) / F₆ (rxn) (0.6)
2a. V₇ (14.0) / A₈ (rxn) (1.5)
V₉ (11.9) / A₁₀ (rxn) (1.5)
2b. V₁₁ (3.5) / A₁₂ (rxn) (3.1)
V₁₃ (4.0) / A₁₄ (rxn) (3.0)
V₁₅ (5.7) / A₁₆ (rxn) (3.3)
3. V₁₇ blur-out-of-focus (6.9)
<Flashback...>

Figure 2. Editing Patterns of the “*ḌĒY!*” segment (*Arunachalam*, 1997, dir. Sundar C.)

NB: V = shot of Vedhavalli/Vadivukkarasi; A = shot of Arunachalam/Rajinikanth; F = shot of Arunachalam's father/Vedhavalli's son. Shot numbers are indicated by sub-script. E.g., V₁ is the first shot of the segment and is a shot of Vedhavalli/Vadivukkarasi. Shot-length is indicated in seconds in parentheses next to each shot; / = an editing cut between shots; rxn = reaction shot to the first shot of the phrase (e.g., both A₂ and F₃ are reaction shots to V₁). <...> denotes segments preceding or following the “*ḌĒY!*” segment.

Cross-cutting the editing pattern of the visual-track is a second poetic structure: an aural poetics of addressivity and affect, as entextualized by the denotational text of the dialogue and, especially, by the accompanying music and sound design. This poetic structure comprises four phases, which I have chunked by musical “themes” (see Transcript 2 for the musical score and dialogue). The first three musical themes (1–3) overlap but do not

completely coincide with editing patterns 1a and 2a; the last musical theme (2b, a variant on music theme 2) locks-in with editing pattern 2b. I impressionistically describe the musical themes in Figure 3 below.

- A. Musical theme 1 (~V₁–V₄): A *Jaws*-esque chromatic duo of fortissimo, staccato 8th-notes on low-strings, a half-step apart (E₂ / F₂ / E₂ / F₂), that decrescendos into another two-note phrase of held-out higher-pitched notes, also a half-step apart (D₄ / D₄), the latter of which slides back down to a D₄ as a screeching high-string note (D₇) crescendos to an almost unbearable peak, at which point it fades out. The effect is to create a menacing and rising tension, both in the building dynamics and the dissonance of the D₄ and the D₇.
- B. Musical theme 2 (~A₅–V_{7 [partial]}): An allegro series of ascending forte 16th-notes on strings (two measures in 4/4 comprised of 4 groups of 4 16th-notes overlaying A₅–V₆); the series speeds up as the pattern progresses, from ~105 to ~108 bpm. The melodic theme is structured in the following way:
- an initial tonic note rises in pitch as the theme proceeds: (D--- / D--- / E--- / F---);
 - after the tonic follows a minor descending melody, with the 2nd and 3rd notes of the run a half-step apart and the 4th note a full-step or more apart: (–FEC# / –A_♭GF / –B_♭AG / –D_♭CB_♭);
 - the theme features dissonant voicings, in particular, diminished fifths or sixths between the 1st (tonic) and the 2nd note: (---- / DA_♭ -- / EB_♭ -- / FD_♭ --).
- The theme then repeats again (starting at V₇), but an octave up, in piano volume, and at a slower tempo (~106 bpm). The tension of musical theme 1 is increased in musical theme 2 by its dark, chromatically ascending and dissonant voicings, as well as by the hurried movement of the minor-key melody.
- C. Musical theme 3 (V_{7 [partial]}–V₉): a slower, melodramatic set of melodies, theme 3 has two parts (3a and 3b in Transcript 2), each repeated two times. Both are in a 3/4 time-signature in D-minor. The first part (3a; beginning midway in V₇ and ending with A₈) has a stately if tense set of quick triplets half a step apart (FFF EEE F) followed by a legato descending line of quarter notes, from the minor-third down the scale to the minor-sixth: F E D C B_♭. The second part (3b; A₈–V₉) further slows down (~72.5 bpm), featuring a lush, swelling string section in a lilting and melodramatic melody (with a heart-wrenching major seventh [C#] thrown in). The effect is rueful and lamentful. The melody fades as V₉ comes to an end. Following it, and transitioning into musical theme 2b, is the sound of howling wind (A₁₀–V₁₁).
- D. Musical theme 2b (V₁₁–V₁₇): Musical theme 2b consists of 3 measures in 4/4 time-signature, repeated 3 times. (Not on a strict beat, “measures” of the music are synchronized to the visual track.) Each iteration is coordinated with the editing cuts:
- Iteration 1: A₁₂–V₁₃,
 Iteration 2: A₁₄–V₁₅,
 Iteration 3: A₁₆–V₁₇.
- The general form of each iteration is:
- a dramatic, exclamative horn stab and string note followed by
 - a chromatically ascending, heavily vibrato, allegro string run reminiscent of musical theme 2; this run ends with
 - the holding of the last note of (ii) until the next shot. (Alternatively, we can see each such held note (iii) as equivalent to the wind-howling of V₁₁ and the end of V₁₇, in which case musical theme 2b can be parsed vis-à-vis the editing/shots as Iteration 1: V₁₁–A₁₂, Iteration 2: V₁₃–A₁₄, Iteration 3: V₁₅–A₁₆, followed by V₁₇.)
- Melodically, the theme is structured in the following way: each stab (i) ascends—from C# to D# to E—just as each string run (ii) begins a half-step above the previous iteration as it descends, nearly chromatically, in pitch to its resting note (iii): B_♭, C, C#. The total effect is an echo to the dramatic, minor-keyed theme 2, but drawn out and intensified in its built-up affect, as iconized by the rising pitch structure of the phrase repeated in triplicate.

Figure 3. Musical themes of the “DĒY!” segment

Both poetic patterns (editing and musical, visual and aural) function as endogenous text-internal metapragmatics (and in that sense, are reflexively calibrated to the so-entextualized segment) insofar as they convergently co-textualize the film-internal signs that they are coincident with. Analyzing the editing patterns (Figure 2), musical themes (Figure 3), narrative (denotational) textuality, camera work, and *mis-en-scène* of the scene alongside each other (as diagramed in Transcript 2) reveals a dynamic figuration of a diegetic and spectatorial affect of shock and vulnerability centered on the hero-spectator (and, simultaneously, star-fan) relation. How so?

As noted above, Vedhavalli/Vadivukkarasi's "*ḌĒY!*" in V_1 breaks with the previous segment and initiates editing pattern 1. After her outburst (which occurs with no music) musical theme 1 begins, the first phrase of which ominously/menacingly frames Arunachalam and his father's confused, shocked reactions (A_2 , F_3). The second phrase of the theme occurs slightly after the cut back to V_4 and co-occurs with Vedhavalli's reformulation of Arunachalam's earlier promise (to give his share of the family property) as a question, building into the roaring zenith of the high-pitched (D7) screeching string note, underneath which resolves the lower-string note (by a glissando from D#4 to D4). Over the decaying music/silence, Vedhavalli concludes her turn with the offending, vocatively modified (-ē) "*Anāte payal-ē!*" 'You, orphan child!', her utterance negating the felicity condition of Arunachalam's promise. The music and the rapid reaction shots (A_2 , F_3) build up to the affective peak of Vedhavalli's insult at the end of V_4 .

These four shots are framed, importantly, by the co-incidence of two moments of musical silence and two addressee-focal deictic forms: Vedhavalli's initial outburst (*ḌĒY*) and her cutting incrimination (*anāte payal-ē*) to Arunachalam. Both are framed not simply as shocking but as something of an enigma, both for us, the audience, and for Arunachalam, the hero, whose face we see in A_5 in dumbstruck silence. Why is she saying this? (It is not motivated by anything else in the previous denotational text of the narrative.) Right before the cut to A_5 , musical theme 2 begins (anticipating the cut by less than a tenth of a second), its tempo speeding up alongside an extended reaction shot of Arunachalam (A_5).²⁷ This shot begins from a dramatic, high-angle medium-long-shot and zooms-in in slow-motion to a close-up on Arunachalam's stunned face. In addition to tempo, this camera movement also iconically mirrors the rising pitch and volume of the music. This theme continues over Arunachalam's father's outburst ("*Ammā!*" 'mother!'; shot F_6).

With V_7 , editing pattern 2 begins as musical theme 2 continues, repeating itself at a slower tempo and up an octave as it decrescendos and moves into the sonic background. Vedhavalli now turns to address her son, telling him to keep quiet and then expressing in

rage that she ‘can’t stand it any longer.’ A little after 3 seconds into the 14-second shot V₇ (the longest shot of the segment), the camera begins tracking out as Vedhavalli descends from the dais, walking down the stairs toward her son and Arunachalam. One second into the tracking-out, musical theme 3a begins as Vedhavalli begins to narrate to her son a past incident from the previous scene, wherein she rejected a suggestion that her granddaughter, the heroine, marry Arunachalam. Here, the strings shift into theme 3b and swell over a downward tilting reaction shot of Arunachalam (A₈). The visual-track then cuts to Vedhavalli (V₉) as she narrates how that past outrage has repeated itself, with Arunachalam trying to marry her grandson (his brother) to a servant girl. As the past comes into the present in her narrative, she comes closer to Arunachalam in the diegetic/profilmic space. Here, the long shot of Vedhavalli tilts slowly as she descends the remainder of the stairs, creating an echo between the camera movements of A₈ and V₉. Shot V₉ and musical theme 3b conclude with Vedhavalli repeating her initial expression of disgust, ‘I can’t stand any more of this!’, echoing the phrase that began this musical theme/tracking-shot. In concluding this internal sequence, Vedhavalli uses a neuter, proximal third-person pronoun and spatial adverb (*itukku mēl*, ‘it-DAT. above’) co-referential with the narrative past and its present manifestation, which contrasts with the temporal adverb *inimēl* ‘any longer, henceforth’ used at its outset of this internal sequence. The music comes to a stop as A₁₀ shows us Arunachalam’s shocked reaction in a downward tilting medium close-up, a direct echo of A₈ (and indirectly of V₉).

This tilt is something of a punctuation that the other shoe is about to drop now that Vedhavalli has come down the stairs and is face-to-face with Arunachalam. All we hear is the howling wind as Arunachalam continues to stand there dumbfounded. The image cuts to V₁₁ as the wind wails on.²⁸ Here, the musical theme and the editing pattern enter into a tight, metricalized lock-step. Over the wind, Vedhavalli turns back to Arunachalam, and again growls “*Ḍēy!* (0.8) I’m saying it now’. Here, she implicitly (echoically) cites his earlier utterance of the same vocative/response cry (in promising his share of the family property to the servant girl; see Transcript 1) but now in service of returning to her earlier incrimination (which is also citationally in play).

After a pregnant pause of 0.6 seconds comes the bombshell: ‘this is not your father!’ As she says this, the camera quickly tracks-in from a medium shot to a close-up on her face. A reaction shot of Arunachalam (A₁₂) follows in a dramatic zoom-in in slow-motion, recalling shot A₅ (Arunachalam’s initial reaction shot after Vedhavalli’s utterance of ‘orphan child!’). This camera movement and effect is accompanied by musical theme 2b, which similarly recalls theme 2 (which also framed A₅). Shot V₁₃ cuts back to Vedhavalli, who delivers another shocking revelation (‘No one knows who your father is!’) as the camera

tracks-in to a close-up of her face. Here, instead of the howling wind, however, the last note of the string run that framed Arunachalam's shocked reaction (A_{12}) is held out almost until the end of the shot. Following this is the repetition of musical theme 2b (which slightly anticipates the next shot, A_{14}), though raised in pitch, again framing Arunachalam's shocked reaction, in a slow-motion zoom-in. This pattern—Vedhavalli's revelation about Arunachalam's orphanage in a tracking-in-to-close-up shot as framed by a held-out string note followed by a slow-motion zooming-in reaction shot of Arunachalam as framed by musical theme 2b—is repeated once more (for a third time), with the ascending run again transposed upwards in pitch. Here, Vedhavalli's vitriolic revelation is the most cutting. She lists a litany of things that no one knows about Arunachalam: who his mother is, what his caste is, what his lineage is, or what his ancestry is.

In this triptych, everything is piled on in a densely multimodal diagrammatic structure, with the intensifying revelations in the dialogue iconically echoed by the increasing pitch of the music and the repetition of the tracking-in/zooming-in shot–reaction-shot structure of the editing pattern. Notable is how in this subsegment the reaction shots of Arunachalam/Rajinikanth (A_{12} , A_{14} , A_{16}) are longer in time (shot-length), extended in space (their spatial motion is similarly stretched out by the slow-motion), and increased in proximity (as the camera approaches his face even closer) relative to the immediately previous reaction shots (A_8 , A_{10}). At the same time, the shots of Vedhavalli/Vadivukkarasi become increasingly shorter and punchier (one for each of her accusations), coming to be about the same length as Arunachalam's reaction shots. This increases the affective intensity and indexical focus that is figured as emanating from her person *toward* the vulnerable Arunachalam/Rajini, who, we can add, our attention is thereby increasingly turned to.

Importantly, the formal parallelisms between musical theme/editing pattern 2b and the first phase of this segment (which builds up to shot A_5 with its dramatic, slow-motion zoom-in to Arunachalam) sandwiches editing pattern 2a/musical theme 3, framing it as a kind of interlude. Formally, this hiatus is set off, among other things, by music (the legato, melodic melodrama of musical theme 3 vs. the fast-paced chromatic dissonance of musical themes 2 and 2b; the 3/4 time signature of musical theme 3 vs. the 4/4 time signature of themes 2 and 2b); by dialogue (Vedhavalli's present accusations to Arunachalam in musical themes 1, 2, 2b vs. past-facing reminiscences to her son in theme 3; the bookending utterances 'I can't stand it any longer/I can't stand it anymore!' and the vocative *Ḍēy-s*); by diegetic movement (Vedhavalli's descent from the dais to the ground vs. her stasis in themes 1 and 3); as well as by shot types, angles, and camera movement. Note, for example, how the shots of Vedhavalli and Arunachalam in this internal sequence *track out* rather than *in*, just as the reaction shots of Arunachalam all tilt down in normal time versus zoom-in in slow-motion.

The total effect is a return in heightened, detailed affect to what sets off the segment in the first place: its jarring initial shock/confusion. As noted, what is figured in this segment is an image-text of affect, specifically, of vulnerability. This image-text proceeds through the production of a certain enigmatic perplexion—Why is Vedhavalli calling Arunachalam an orphan?—which then shifts to an explanation of why she feels she has to reveal this accusation in the internal hiatus (editing pattern 2a/musical theme 3), which she goes on to reiterate and specify the nature of, itself fully explained in the flashback that follows.

The transition from this segment to this flashback is a close-up shot (V₁₇) of Vedhavalli/Vadivukkarasi. While this parallels the end-points of the tracking-in shots of V₁₁, V₁₃, and V₁₅, it is also set off from them. The music has again subsided as the howling wind comes up in the mix. But most importantly, in V₁₇ Vedhavalli/Vadivukkarasi is looking directly into the camera as the lens begins to go out of focus into a smear of colors. Here, Vedhavalli/Vadivukkarasi fully takes over the space of narrative enunciation ('Thirty years ago ...') and directly addresses the audience, some of whom, as we know, held Vadivukkarasi responsible for "her" words.

In sum, in this segment we find a dense, tightly configured poetics: of editing pattern; shot-length and shot-type; camera movement and effects; musical phrasing, tempo, pitch, volume, key and time signature; character gazes, movement, and dialogue. Cumulatively, this poetics depicts and enacts, over the emergence of the segment, an image-text of intense shock, vulnerability, and humiliation at the hands of Vedhavalli/Vadivukkarasi, one that focuses in tightly on Arunachalam/Rajinikanth as the spectator's object of attention and empathy.²⁹ As we see below, this dense poetics metapragmatically regiments the deictics in the scene in particular ways. Yet if it does so, it does so relative to its own complex and multiple meta(meta)pragmatic regimentation. The poetics of this segment registers this regimentation in its very texture and, in doing so, gives rise to the complex performative effects that took place on the Dindugal tracks that day in the late 1990s. To understand this performativity, however, requires that we attend to the meta(meta)pragmatic calibration of this scene, and its poetics, in its cultural context.

From Nomic to (Reportive to) Reflexive Calibration, Histoire to Discours

Let us return to our earlier question: how are the indexical signs in this sequence calibrated to the events of their happening, in particular, to the moment when we hear and see the scene on the screen? Is the music "in" the diegesis, that is, can the characters hear it? Or is it only calibrated to our event of viewing and hearing, and thus only for us? Or is it both, as a kind of hybrid, where we aurally experience the non-diegetic music in a way that is how the characters non-musically experience the happenings in the diegesis (free-indirect aurality, as it were)? Similarly, are the zoom-ins and the slow-motion effects anchored to the narrative world or the event of spectatorship? Or again, is it both: do the

zoom and the slow-motion effect provide a look and mode of vision that is no character's look but that allows us to see as they see/feel (characterizing the vision of the object of *our* vision), with shock and distress? In the frontal shots, is Vadivukkarasi or Rajini looking toward *us*, the audience? Or are the characters Vedhavalli and Arunachalam looking at each other? And finally, is Vadivukkarasi addressing *us* as orphan children, or perhaps Rajinikanth himself? Or is her character addressing the character, Arunachalam, as an orphan?

With regard to this last question, obviously, the latter, we would like to say—it is the *characters* that are engaged with each other. And why? And why obviously? Because it's a fictional film, an *histoire*. Which is to say, because the indexical origo of the scene has “shifted,” anchored to the fictive world of the narrative through the co-textual juxtapositions of shots, and bodily movement and eye-gaze lines within shots, that figure a coherent diegetic space within which the indexical signs on the screen are contained. Within that diegetic space, we would further like to say that, as anchored to the narrative world, the ‘I’-s and ‘you’-s that are embedded within this scene do not—or better, should not insofar as this is a fiction—denote the actors Vadivukkarasi and Rajinikanth but instead the characters, Vedhavalli and Arunachalam, as animated *by* those actors in the *narrative's* world.

This last point indicates that the deictics in question—on this interpretation of the film as only a fictional narrative—are not quite or not only reportively calibrated (or reflexively calibrated for that matter); for the meaningfulness of the deictics does not turn on any stipulation of a temporal or spatial continuity, or coincidence, between the narrating and narrated events—as in, for example, an entextualization that would read the ‘I’-s and the ‘you’-s of the scene as anchored to the profilmic moment of shooting. In other words, the deictics are not interpreted as a “documentary” of the performance by actors whose existence is not limited to the narrative or diegetic world but exist independently of it. (Though, of course, this reportive calibration is always in play insofar as we understand film to involve events of performance for a co-present camera.) By contrast to such a documentary reading, as a fiction the narrative frame frustrates and seemingly transcends such a reportive calibration type while encompassing and building upon it, functioning as a nomically calibrated metapragmatic. Which is to say, the fiction appears to be in no particular spatiotemporal relationality to the event of screening, to our here-and-now, even as we have stipulatively direct (epistemic) access to it.³⁰ Such a metapragmatic frame thus partially defeases and disrupts the co-referentiality of character and actor, of the profilmic timespace of shooting and the timespace of screening, which would otherwise hold under the reportively calibrated “documentary” framing. This is what we mean by saying that the actors are simply “playing” “characters.”

Fictional narrative, in short, is a reportive frame that approaches something like the nomic calibration of myth. By this I mean that fictional narratives have the capacity to detach themselves from their moments of narrating, their worlds standing apart and above our own.³¹ We may also put this proposition in reverse: fictional narratives operate under a myth-like nomic calibration that, in being so detached from the spatiotemporal envelope of the narrating world, can also be cloaked in the vestments of a world that could plausibly be our own (as in “realist” genres, for example).³² In either case, the metapragmatic calibration of fictional narratives decenter deictic semiosis from its event of narrating, containing its reference “within” the frame, allowing us access to the inside of the frame even as we are positioned as spatiotemporally independent of it.³³

So much for us. But what about the illiberal fan and his excited entextualization in Vadivukkarasi’s narrative? What about the subject who took offense at Vadivukkarasi, the *actress*, insulting the star, Rajinikanth, a subject whose entextualizing uptake was already anticipated by, and constitutive of, the enunciated subjectivity of the actress, Vadivukkarasi, who, recall, tried to get out of uttering her lines knowing well how fans would take them up?³⁴ Was this fan confused? Did he not realize that this was not *discours* but simply *histoire*, that it was “just” a movie, a fiction, a myth?

No. The fan in Vadivukkarasi’s narrative was not confused. He saw the film image for what it always is: an act, a fabrication made from the shards of recorded reality reassembled into a narrative that cannot fully contain it, a reality that includes the sociological and biographical narratives of those who enunciated it, in a communicative *act* to an audience who participates in it. This fan was, in fact, a sophisticated theorist of cinematic deixis and enunciation, for narrative too must be enacted and enunciated, and thus every (fictional) nomic calibration involves a (recorded) reportive calibration³⁵ and a (theatrical) reflexive calibration to the event of the image’s screened happening, that is, is brought to bear *within* the timespace envelope of viewing, in this case, as offenses *to the fan-spectators themselves*.

What is of interest to us is the interplay between these multiple “contexts” and frames of reference. Recall from our discussion that the fan demanded an offscreen apology for the onscreen act of insult precisely *because* the scene didn’t reconcile Vadivukkarasi’s speech act of insult within the narrative economy of the film; that is, because Vadivukkarasi, the actress, wasn’t punished by Rajini’s character for *her*, which is also to say, her *character’s* transgression. Further, the fan’s uptake of the scene was mediated by the emotionally powerful affect of the melodrama, itself a function of the scene’s narrative emplotment and rich poetic structure, as discussed above.

At issue, then, for the fan, are three structures of deictic signification that are superposed one on top of the other, such that the shifted calibration of the deictics in the scene *do not* fully defease the illocutionary force of the recalcitrantly reflexively calibrated curse, “*Anāte payalē!*” *Discours* bleeds out of *histoire* (Irvine 2011), the reflexive from the reportive and the nomic, each interacting with each other and coagulating in complex ways. But there is actually much more to say here, for part of the reason why the illocutionary force of Vadivukkarasi’s speech act in *Arunachalam* holds beyond the screen is because of *who* is involved. Namely, because of the presence of the “Super Star” Rajinikanth in the scene.

I use the word *presence* here pointedly (see Nakassis 2017, 2019, n.d. for more detailed discussion and examples). At the time of *Arunachalam*’s release, Rajinikanth was the most massive and powerful of what are called in South India “mass heroes” (Srinivas 2009). Mass heroes are bombastic and fantastically hyper-masculine celebrity figures, larger than life and larger than the screen. They have “mass,” an English borrowing which in Tamil refers to power or charisma, and as such they are heroes to “the masses,” that is, they have incredibly large fan followings that treat them not simply as objects of pleasure, identification, or affection, but also as political representatives of them, as their ‘leaders’ (*talaivarkaḷ*, literally, ‘head-men’) as they are referred to by fans (as you’ll recall from earlier discussion). And indeed, such heroes often move from cinema into electoral politics. Important for us, here, is how mass-hero films like *Arunachalam* narratively and aesthetically build up the hero-star as a populist man of the people who, in distinction from the masses he represents, is all-powerful and, ultimately, invincible and infallible (Pandian 1992; Prasad 2014).

Hence the shock at seeing Rajini’s character in *Arunachalam* rendered so (temporarily) vulnerable by Vadivukkarasi’s character in this scene. And hence, further, the aesthetic entextualization of the scene—its repeated zooms, the tracking-in to close-up shots, the slow-motion elongated shots of Rajini’s face, the affectively melodramatic musical accompaniment—such that we see him as he feels and further, thus, as how we (are invited to) feel. Here, again, note the multiple calibration types and indexical targets of the same signs: to character, to actor, to audience. The whole aesthetic assemblage of this scene, with its rich affect-intensifying poetics, in short, is a *response* to Rajini’s mass and star image, its narrativized intensity registering his presence and aura in and beyond the image.

A crucial point to be emphasized is that the narrative roles of mass heroes like Rajinikanth are never simply fictions projected on the screen (which is why the addressee-focality of “*Anāte payalē*” ‘you orphan’ necessarily also points to Rajinikanth). To be a mass hero is not to simply *act* as one in *one* film; it is to *be* one in *every* film in which one appears. The relevant unit within which any mass-hero character is experienced, then, is not the

narrative text at all, but the intertextual series of the star. And, indeed, the films of mass-heroes like Rajinikanth are marked by compulsive references to the actor's *other* films (Dyer 1998[1979]; Nakassis 2016a), as well as to his star personage and his biographical history. As such, all such films are united in the personage—in the face, the name, and the trademark mannerisms (all rigid designators, note)—of the celebrity star, in this case, the “Super Star” Rajinikanth. Under such conditions, each of his characters is experienced as an *iteration*, a counterpart, of every other character, and each, in turn, is an *avatar* of the star himself. Every film narrative's nomic calibration, in other words, is already reportively calibrated to each of his other narratives through the rigid designators of the star-actor himself,³⁶ linked as a kind of semiotic infrastructure regimenting each token-appearance of the hero-star in some narrative or other.

One effect of this intertextuality is, to return to the point at hand, the star's *presence* in his image. The mass hero's stardom functions as a metapragmatics of presence, whereby over and beyond his character and the narrative world in which he is emplotted there is, always and already, the star himself, unchanged and unending. Projected out of the screen, the hero is always present to us, in the theater with us, close to us, touching us (cf. Pinney 2004). To say that the mass hero is with us in the theater, thus, is to say that the sign of hero-star is, in some measure, the star-actor himself. Mass-hero films exploit and realize this sense of presence by featuring copious, ritualized scenes in which the star is reflexively calibrated to the event of his screening (cf. Casetti 1998[1986]): shots of the eyes looking at the audience, gestures pointing to the audience, direct linguistic address to the audience, and references to the time and space of viewing—all of these are formulaic features of such films that their directors describe as “building up” the hero-star (see Nakassis 2019). And such images are, importantly, taken up as such, with some fan-spectators interpreting his screen presence—and his words, gestures, looks—as, indeed, *addressed to* and *for* them (Srinivas 2009).

As noted, this kind of reflexive calibration is a (nominally calibrating) generic feature of mass-hero films, part of the (reportively calibrated) intertextual series that comprises the stardom that touches down, as it were, in such theatrical moments. The hero's mass, in short, enables him to inhabit both *discours* and *histoire* at once, like two eyes in stereoscopic vision or, better, three notes amplifying and playing off of each other in metapragmatic harmony. Yet filmic images of the star are not just reflexively and reportively calibrated. Rather, every such image is also *nominally* calibrated, in this case, not by the narrative text or the genre of the mass film but by the transtextual, transcendent star persona of the actor himself. As discussed above, nomic calibration both negates the indexicality of deixis—since it abstracts from its own contextual grounding—and, at one and the same time, massively multiplies it—since its indexical value seems to hold across all contexts of happening. As one hero-star, Karthi Sivakumar

put it to me in an interview in 2011: “They call it film history. You have a history of films. And that-, that works when you say a dialogue. When you say something, he, he [the viewer] imagines (all) the other characters (the actor has ever played) are all saying that line.” This chorus is bundled in the ‘I’ of a hero-star like Rajinikanth, its referent the actor (then and now), the character in the film, and every one of his others characters in all of his films, and yet also something further, their sum more than their reportively calibrated parts or their reflexively calibrated instantiations. Like the body of Christ that is manifested in “real presence” in the ritual of the Eucharist (Belting 1994; Silverstein 2004; Leone and Parmentier 2014), or the Hindu god in its idol (Pinney 2004; Jain 2007), Rajini is really present in his image, his bread and butter, as it were. Distinct from classical understandings of representation—wherein the sign is not its Object—here the cinematic sign *is* its Object, its representation made flesh. This (nomic) presence reflexively regiments all indexical signs in its wake.

Under such circumstances, we can now see why to insult Rajini’s character in any particular film is to insult him, not simply as a profane biographical person but also as a sacred personage. Under such circumstances, the enunciation of nomically calibrated *histoire* is also an act of reflexively calibrated *discours*. I don’t mean this in the sense of *discours* as a scaffold or infrastructure of *histoire*—that is, in the sense discussed earlier that every narrative presupposes some act of narration (though it does). Rather, what I mean is that under these circumstances what is narratively depicted (the denotational text, the image text) is always also an act that is interactionally realized *in the event of its happening*. This is precisely the semiotic structure of explicit performativity, as described by J. L. Austin (1962) and Émile Benveniste (1973[1958]a), and the more general semiotic form of ritual, as described by symbolic and linguistic anthropologists, where what is (iconically or symbolically) figured or denoted is (indexically) enacted in the event of its depiction/description (Silverstein 2004; Stasch 2011; Nakassis 2013a; Fleming and Lempert 2014).

Such a performativity builds off of the nomically calibrated narrative structure of the film and breaches it at one and the same time, weaving star and story, diegesis and screening, image and act in a complex dialectic spiral. This performativity has strong subjectivity effects, for it prevents all who are in the filmic wake of Rajinikanth from simply acting as “characters.” It prevents mere animation (*sensu* Goffman 1981) and creates a residually rigid designation (a fixed “counterpart relation,” to use Hanks’s [2005] phrase), where every deictic reference by or to a character animated by Rajinikanth is also a reference by or to Rajinikanth himself. While in what we would consider a “normal” narrative the actor’s subjectivity is doubled, she is herself and her character, in a Rajinikanth film like *Arunachalam Vadivukkarasi*’s subjectivity is split yet collapsed: her character shares ontic space with her offscreen identity as an actress and vice versa. This is not simply because

of the rigid (physical) indexicality of filmic media (its “trace”); rather, as we have seen, it is an effect of the rigid metapragmatic indexicality of the star’s heavenly mass. Under such conditions, Vadivukkarasi, the actress is also what Goffman (1974, 1981) called the *principal* of her character’s act of insult: she is now the one (rigidly) responsible for her character’s words, for to be in the orbit of the mass of the hero is to be co-present with him *and with* and *within his image*, wherever it travels, wherever it is perceived (Nakassis 2020).

Conclusion

What are we to make of all this in the context of thinking about linguistic deixis? Are all of the effects discussed above simply the result of the technological mediation of film cameras, celluloid, projectors, and the institutional and cultural mediation of Tamil cinematic and political fields as they come to frame linguistic deictics like personal pronouns and other indexical signs (like pointing, eye-gaze, and the like)? And if so, are such cases thus extraneous to or epiphenomenal of deixis and indexicality as such?

No, insofar as the kinds of deixis and indexicality at issue in our discussion above also include non-linguistic signs such as camera movement and shot-type, that is, those that are intrinsic to film and also require explanation.

But also, No, insofar as our point is that the cinema reveals more general features of deixis, in language and beyond language: that deictic signs are open to, indeed, dependent on multiple calibration types; that they require as a condition of their meaningfulness multiple, often simultaneous or immanent, orders of metasemiotic regimentation; that they do their work not by only being “in” a context but by losing and gaining and taking leave of their contexts along their ways. Linguistic deictics are a special case, as linguistic anthropologists have argued, of a more general condition of language: its indexicality and its metapragmatic mediation. Cinematic deixis is an even more special case of semiosis, perhaps, but one which elucidates an even more general fact about indexicality. This isn’t because of a particular medium-specificity of the cinema (though we don’t deny such specificities) but rather simply because of the way in which the necessary possibilities of deixis are institutionally manifest and built out in the cinema—and the Tamil cinema in particular—in ways that render them visible to and cognizable by us as analysts. Indeed, as suggested by the discussion above, other cinematic cultures and institutions of spectatorship and production (such as those associated with classical Hollywood, for example) may actively work against any kind of reflexive calibration of narrative, working to shield the diegesis behind a fourth-wall which we disavow in our supposed “suspension of disbelief” (Hansen 1991).³⁷ Even there, this purification of calibration types itself is a fiction, as continually revealed by both those controversies, here and there and across the history of the cinema, where onscreen and offscreen blur, hybridized, collapse,

and traverse each other (see, e.g., Peppin 2020), as well by those films that exploit, and even thematize, the immanent cinematic dialectics of representationality and performativity, (meta)pragmatics and meta(meta)pragmatics, and reflexive, reportive, and nomic calibration types in their poetics, narrative textuality, and screenings.

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Abbreviations

In this article, I use the following abbreviations: 1p. = 1st person; ACC. = accusative case; ACT. = active voice; AVP = adverbial participle; DAT. = dative case; EMPH. = emphatic particle; HON. = honorific; INDIC. = indicative mood; NEUT. = neuter; NOM. = nominative case; POSS. = possessive; PRES. = present tense; SING. = singular; VOC. = vocative; prox.demon. = proximal demonstrative; (.) = pause less than 0.2 seconds; in quoting speech, double quotation marks are used for direct quotations in the source language and single quotations for glosses (of Tamil) in English.

Notes

1. This is with the exception, perhaps, of what Saussure (1986[1916]) advocated as the foundation of the “science” of language, *langue* (Nakassis 2018), namely, the denotational and metasemantic capacity of language, though this too is not autonomous from the pragmatics of discourse, as many linguistic anthropologists have argued. As one anonymous reviewer rightly pointed out, however, following a point Barthes (1967) argued in his discussion of fashion and other semiological “systems,” this uniqueness has

wider implications for non-linguistic semiosis insofar as it enables language to serve as a metalanguage to imbue such non-linguistic modalities and media with the complex, rich values and capacities we observe them to have. My point is not to deny this important fact, however, but only to argue that it shouldn't blinker our inquiry narrowly to the denotational capacity of language. See note 2. ↩

2. In doing so, linguistic anthropology has paid special attention to those functions and processes that undermine any attempt to rigidly purify language from non-language. This is one result of the strong argument against unduly privileging the denotational and referential function of language as our analytic strategy to get a handle on it—which is, as Silverstein (1976) pointed out, the main basis upon which disciplinary linguistics has proceeded since Saussure, if not long before. ↩

3. The genitive here is meant to be suggestive of any number of linguistic anthropologies, from cinema to ... One question is, why call this linguistic anthropology and not just, say, semiotic anthropology (or just semiotics for that matter). My point, as discussed in the main text above, is that linguistic anthropology's epistemological, methodological, analytic, and theoretical engagement with semiosis—be it linguistic or otherwise—troubles any notion of “language” that would define it *based* on the purification of its putative uniqueness or medium specificity (*langue*). It is in this sense that linguistic anthropologists do not study “language” even if, and especially when, they study what, from a formal, structuralist perspective, would be denoted by the lexeme, language or even *langue*. To aver otherwise is to walk back on precisely the intervention of linguistic anthropology; and while doing so may have its own pragmatic purposes, it does so only with a form of ambivalence that I view as ultimately unproductive. It is for this reason that I insist on this project being a *linguistic* anthropology of cinema, precisely to hold on to the genealogy and sensibility from which this argument emerges while not conceding, and zoning of, what language is and what it is to study it—viz. what constitutes linguistic anthropology—in ways that renege on the field's major advances. See Nakassis 2016b, 2018, n.d. for more discussion. ↩

4. To say that all natural languages have deictics is not to say that so-called artificial languages lack them; as Peirce notes, no act of reference or propositional assertion is possible without deixis, be this in “natural” language or in logical or mathematical notations (Peirce 1992[1898]:155–56). ↩

5. Notice, incidentally, how this opposes deictics to the complement class of signs that are *not* context-dependent, or rather, not context-dependent in their dominant function (denotation), an opposition that implicitly voices, even as it reproduces, precisely the yoke that deixis is supposed to free us from. The nagging persistence of “encoding” views of deixis are symptomatic of this, perhaps (see Manning 2001; Hanks 2005). ↩

6. Michael Silverstein (1976, 1992, 2004) has long argued the reverse—namely, for the sign’s-eye-view on context: that context is that which is projected indexically, either as presupposed or entailed, by signs in their emergent unfolding. Also see Goodwin 2018:188 on this point. ↩

7. Bakhtin and Vološinov used the term *voicing* to describe the ways in which discourse articulates the “voices” of others within itself. Such a virtual dialogue is invoked implicitly in all discourse, perhaps, but is most explicitly marked in reported speech constructions. Goffman uses the term *footing* to describe the various alignments that participants take to the discourse which orients them: for example, as *author* (the composer of a message), *animator* (the enactor of a message), or *principal* (the person responsible for a message). Such distinct footings may converge with each other in any semiotic act (where one might be author, animator, and principal at once) or be disaggregated, as in voicing phenomena. ↩

8. We might say that in such cases, the “context” of the deictic still matters; and that is true and fine, but it doesn’t help us since it leads us back to the problem that we need to be able to describe deictic signs—and all indexical signs—vis-à-vis *multiple* possible contexts, which we would like to be able to differentiate between systematically. And not simply multiple *possible* contexts but, in such cases, multiple *actual* contexts, with distinct voicings and event structures (minimally, a narrating and a narrated event). ↩

9. This gives a slightly different slant on Jespersen and Jakobson’s notion that deictics are “shifters.” They are (legi)signs whose indexicality makes it such that the token-event of their happening may, and thus must, be put into some kind of relationship to *other* events, other signs, other times and places, and other persons. One special case—the case we take as “normal” when discussing deixis—is when the relating and the related event (or narrating and narrated event, to use Jakobson’s terms) are one and the same. But, as I suggest in the main text below, such a configuration is perhaps the exception. ↩

10. It is important to note that an indexical origo is a legisign, a (transcontextual) contextual variable: speaker, addressee, utterance, et cetera. In that sense, it is itself part of the semantic/interactional schema of the deictic which itself must be *placed*, planted in the indexical ground of some event or other (i.e., some *particular* origo, a sinsign-realization of the variable). It is thus something of a misnomer to say that an origo is “shifted,” since what is shifted is the event-structure within which the origo (qua semiotic-act variable) is realized/placed; for example, in a direct reported speech construction, the origo of the deictics in the subordinate clause remain the same (“I” = speaker of token *I*) even as the event of speech relative to which such a speaker-function is referentially saturated is shifted (from the event of narrating to some narrated event). ↩

11. This analysis could perhaps be translated into the notion of embedding/embedded “fields” (semantic, deictic, social; Hanks 2005; Edwards 2012, 2017), though I do not do so here. What this analysis adds to

that understanding is its specific concern to characterize the general metapragmatic relations (here, calibration types) that multiply articulate, or block, distinct but entangleable event structures (and thus deictic fields) to each other, and the semiotic and political processes by which this happens. In doing so, I am less concerned to show the determinate embedding of discrete fields of different types (e.g., social fields constraining deictic fields that are embedded “in” them) than to highlight the indeterminate/contested “horizontal” interplays between multiple “fields” (of the same and different types) and frames of reference (Hanks 2005:209), in particular, how “social fields” (cinematic, political, etc.) multiply the frames of reference and ambiguate the referents that entail them (vs. constrain and overdetermine them to enable definite reference; cf. Hanks 2005:211). Thanks to Terra Edwards for pushing me to articulate this difference in focus.↵

12. I add this elaboration (“in the event of so-uttering it”) since one and the same utterance may contain two tokens of / that refer to the “same” person but in different event structures, as in represented speech constructions (“I said I love you, but I wasn’t myself”). Whether all these “I”s are, in fact, the “same” is a matter of some interest. On the complexities involved here, see Goffman 1974, 1981; Hill 1995; Grenoble 1998:119–20; Barker 2019.↵

13. Not all reportive calibrations “shift” the origos of the deictics involved; while they do in direct reported speech in English, for example, they don’t in indirect reported speech, where all the deictics are reflexively calibrated to the narrating event. All shifted origos, however, involve a reportive (or, by extension, nomic) calibration. In this, there is much variation across languages as to what can(not) or must (not) shift under conditions of reportive calibration (Evans 2013; Grenoble 1998:113–49), creating a range of entextualizable effects (as explored by Vološinov 1986[1929] and Bakhtin 1982, among others).↵

14. As one reviewer put it, nomic calibration is “scaffolded by reportive and reflexive readings, which it then ‘stipulatively’ negates.” This is precisely parallel with the Peircean trichotomy of icon, index, and symbol (as well, qualisign, sinsign, legisign and rheme, dicent, argument); for while the symbol is “scaffolded” by (and containing of) iconic and indexical relations, it is only intelligible *qua* symbol if taken as a semiotic ground by stipulation (as embodied in its interpretant and the genuinely triadic relation it mediates). The same point holds for denotational text and grammar, both nomic calibrations which erase the interactional and image texts and pragmatics and poetics, respectively, out of which they are built and emerge. Like all Peircean trichotomies—which Silverstein (1993), as I take him, is voicing—the trichotomy of reflexive, reportive, nomic involves relations of mutual inclusion/immanence and implication of all the categories within each other. (Note, then, how Peirce’s architectonic functions as a nomic calibration of Silverstein’s text, implicitly voiced through his indexical iconic renvoi, reportively calibrated, to Peirce’s own texts, if uniquely poetically entextualized in his own essay.)↵

15. Given that this relation of regimentation is recursive, there are 3^x number of possibilities depending on how many ($=x$) metapragmatic orders/frames one brings into focus. To elaborate Silverstein's adage (1998:128), it is metapragmatics "all the way down (and up, left, and right)."↵

16. Others cells, by contrast, are hybrid composites (e.g., 3ii) or multifunctional (i.e., with multiple indexical targets), e.g., 1iii, which nomically presupposes a schema of cultural value/metapragmatic stereotypy which, in so doing, reflexively characterizes (entails something of) the semiotic event. 2ii and 3ii are (denotationally) explicit metapragmatics (metapragmatic discourse); 2iii and 3iii may be explicitly realized but need not be; 1i, 1ii, 2i, 3i are implicit metapragmatics. (Implicit and explicit are used *sensu* Silverstein 1993.)↵

17. This example is more complex, in fact, since this echoic effect can, in some contexts—like our "Shut up" example—split the calibration type into two, the "you," for example, being both citationally decentered (non-addressee-referring) and reflexively calibrated (addressee-referring).↵

18. Here, we can similarly consider cases of what Urban (1989) terms the "projective" "I," where "I" denotes a speaking-subject transformed into another subject, reportively (and nomically) calibrated to the instance of use.↵

19. Note, thus, that shifters and rigid designators are names *not* for form-classes but semiotic *functions*. Rather than fixed categories, they are provisional text-in-context achievements within encompassing historical and institutional envelopes; hence, personal pronouns may function as rigid designators (as Kripke himself notes; and as enacted in our example above regarding the text-artifact of this essay) and proper names may function as shifters, symbolic predicates, or something in between or both (*mutatis mutandis* for common nouns and the associated, symbolic functionality they [proto]typically instantiate/draw upon). To take one example, consider cases where rigid designators are rendered into metapragmatic predicates through a kind of delocutionary transformation (Benveniste 1973[1958]b; Silverstein 1993:51), as in, "He Sondlanded everyone in that meeting" (to mean, threw them under the bus, just like Gordon Sondland might be seen as having done in the 2019 House impeachment inquiry of Donald S. Trump). ↵

20. Reading the bottom row of the table: ritual poetics are enlivened by their "leading edges" (performatives) and both are animated by ideologies of various sorts, just as ideologies presuppose and entail performative acts, which have their own poetics; similarly, reading the right-edge: registers presuppose discourse genres of various sorts—and the voicings enabled thereby—which presuppose particular ideologies and institutions of communication, and vice versa; and so on, we might propose, for the first row and the diagonals.↵

21. For an online video of this interview, see <https://www.dailymotion.com/video/x18bhxy>, accessed August 30, 2020.↵

22. Here, Vadivukkarasi's worry recalls Hanks's (2005:211) observation that "To perform an act of deictic reference is inevitably to thrust oneself [or be thrust into—CVN] a relation with the object" with implications that such an act entails becoming "the sort of person who could and would denote such an object in just such a manner."↵

23. In her re-enactment in the Vijay TV Super Singer segment, Vadivukkarasi first says, in Tamil: 'Now, you all ... asked for his [Rajini's] punch dialogues. I'd like to finish by saying the dialogue for all of you that I got scolded for a lot.' The emcee responds to her "need mand" affirmatively (on need mands and other directives, see Ervin-Tripp 1976), in English: "Please maam." Vadivukkarasi then shifts into character and delivers the dialogue (with harsh phonation, dropped pitch, etc.): "*Ḍēy Arunachalam! Yārōḍa sotto, yārukku yārā eḍuttu koḍukkuratu? Anāte payalē!*" ('Hey! Who the hell is taking and giving whose property to whom? You orphan child!'). Note how Vadivukkarasi's re-enactment shifts the linguistic deictics in question (also note the slightly different delivery of the line, both in terms of lexical choice and more colloquial phonemic style [*yāru ḍā* → *yārā*]), decentering them in reportive calibration. This framing is licensed by Vadivukkarasi's need mand to say the "dialogue" to the audience, but also by her shifts in head position, gaze, and even how she is gripping the microphone (see Figure 1), as well as through the segment's editing (there is a cut-away from her to a 45° high-angle long-shot, on a crane, and then a cut back to her in a frontal medium shot as she enacts the dialogue). But not just her linguistic deictics, so too the nonreferential indexicals of voice quality, pitch, and facial expression—all these signs are reportively calibrated, harkening back to the narrative timespace of the film and its diegesis.↵

24. While *Arunachalam* does, at its climax, stage the apology of Vedhavalli to Arunachalam, for this fan, apparently, this was not punishment enough, or not textually close enough to the offense to count as its expiation. Gender here is critical, with the scolding coming from a woman (and female actress) who is kin to the hero (indeed, online posts of this scene that I have seen on YouTube characterize it as a "sentiment" scene, meaning it involves strongly melodramatic kin affects) rather than a fight scene with a villain, where blows are the appropriate response to the villain's challenges to the hero-star's personage and honor. See Nakassis 2020 for further discussion of questions of age and gender in scenes of this type.↵

25. This slippage from character to actor is reflected in the fan's quote above where the inalienable status term, *Talaivar* 'leader' is coreferential with an honorific third-person verb ending that refers to *both* Rajinikanth, the actor, and *his character*, Arunachalam; similarly, the 'you' in this doubly embedded reportive frame is split, between Vadivukkarasi, whose character got no blows *in the film* and who thus must apologize, as an actress, offscreen. See a similar slippage in Vadivukkarasi's own discourse in narrating her hesitation to call *Rajini* an orphan, discussed above in the main text. ↵

26. The segment that I focus on in the main text below is part of a larger sequence that I don't analyze for reasons of space. The lead into the larger sequence emerges as a narrative break in timespace. After Vedhavalli blocks the suggestion that her granddaughter, the heroine marry Arunachalam, the heroine and her family leave the house, about which a confused Arunachalam inquires. After his father avoids giving a reason, there is a cut to a sun rising and then Arunachalam in the fields. Someone comes to tell him that a panchayat (village council) is happening concerning his younger brother. It then cuts to the space of the panchayat, where the segments that I analyze in the main text begin (Transcripts 1 and 2). After the flashback, Vedhavalli continues to narrate Arunachalam's orphanage and to humiliate him. Notably, the dialogue makes explicit reference to Rajini's star image, as when Vedhavalli/Vadivukkarasi says that the only property ("*paṅku*" 'share') that Arunachalam can claim is the rudhraksha amulet on his neck, which he came to the family with as an infant, and nothing else. This is a reference to the necklace that Rajinikanth, the star-actor always wears, and thus serves as an index of his offscreen personage and his presence in the image. This leads into a song montage sequence where Arunachalam takes off all his precious jewelry and leaves his (adoptive) family with only the clothes on his back and the rudhraksha on his neck. From here, the narrative proceeds to detail Arunachalam's rise as a rich man (here, the plot is based on the contrivances of the 1985 Hollywood film, *Brewster's Millions* [dir. Walter Hill]), the discovery of his true background (he is the son of a wealthy industrialist), and the coming back together of the family around Arunachalam's marriage to the heroine. ↵

27. Musical theme 2 is used earlier in the larger sequence as well, when Arunachalam is confronting his brother during the panchayat. ↵

28. The repeated, rhyming tilt-down of shots A_8 and A_{10} seems to condense and metonymize Vedhavalli's physical movement, capturing the effect of her descent and coming closer. And while not quite point-of-view shots from Vedhavalli's perspective (since each tilt is relatively quick, covering a distance in 1.5 seconds that could not be the same angle/distance covered by Vedhavalli's slow movement down the stairs over 22.7 seconds of screen-time; and indeed, the tilts occur *twice*, the second time at the *end* of Vedhavalli's descent, and hence could not isomorphically map onto her movement), the shots are *from* Vedhavalli's position (upwards on the dais/stairs) and outline her movement (downwards toward Arunachalam), registering her affective and physical movement *toward* Arunachalam *in showing* us Arunachalam. Here, then, we see Arunachalam from Vedhavalli's *position* in a movement which *characterizes* the object of its vision (Arunachalam) from *his* affective/subjective perspective. The tilt, we might say, is a mental interpretant of Arunachalam's registering the weight of Vedhavalli's approach/reproach. The effect is that of a "free indirect" point-of-view shot (Pasolini 1988, after Vološinov 1986[1929]). ↵

29. Building on the notion of image-text (Nakassis 2019) and Peirce's (CP 2.277) three types of icons (images, diagrams, metaphors), we can more specifically characterize this dynamic figuration as an image-

text that: (i) figurates a particular *affect* (a quality—Peirce’s “image”—qua immediate interpretant) and (ii) embeds this affect within a figuration of a diagram of relationality, a kind of equation whose arguments (Vadivukkarasi/Vedhavalli and Rajinikanth/Arunachalam, and by extension we, the viewers) are related vis-à-vis that affect. ↩

30. As one reviewer provocatively asked, is not “the ontic splitting” between the narrating and narrated worlds under a nomic calibration itself an *effect* of such calibration, “an abduction which interpreters are pushed to make precisely because reportive and reflexive readings are superimposed on the same signal” while neither alone, nor additively, are exhaustive of its felt scope? ↩

31. This accounts for the fact noted in film studies that we understand the world beyond the frame of the image to continue on beyond it (Morgan 2006:455). ↩

32. As one reviewer suggested, fictional narratives are reportively calibrated representations, a variety of which (folktales, myths) may represent (the emergence of) some nomic order; another variety, realism, represents a seemingly reflexive order, the here-and-now “we” share with the narrated world. But in either case, my point is that this fictional narrative—to the extent that it is *fiction*—necessarily also disarticulates the narrating and narrated worlds as standing in no particular spatiotemporal relationship (hence their nomic calibration). In cases of realism, this fiction asymptotically approaches our own (that unreached asymptote being either documentary or history). ↩

33. As I note below in the main text, this metapragmatic calibration does this work *through*, not despite its reportive and reflexive calibrations, even as these calibrations are effaced in the achievement of nomic transcendence. Indeed, there would be no fiction to apprehend if we were not in a theater engaging a screen, nor if there had been no event of filming. ↩

34. Note the proleptic reportive calibration of Vadivukkari’s pre-shooting worry, where the “I” of discourse includes a *far-future-I* of the actress who the present-I knows will be responsible for her near-future-I’s actions. ↩

35. This reportive calibration includes a reference to the shooting spot (and thus involves the two actors) but also, recall, to another film starring these two actors, that is, an intertextual relationship between her act of insulting Rajinikanth’s character in *Padikkadavan* and then again in *Arunachalam*. ↩

36. This nomic calibration includes, importantly, the reportive, but also rigidly designative, calibration of the profilmic event of appearance (that the actor was in front of the camera) to the event of projection to the audience, the link between the two a continuous interdiscursive, indexical (cf. speech) chain. Each film is

linked to the others by being linked to the actor's names, but also to his *body* (and thus his face, his gestures, his mannerisms); see Rajan Kurai 2014. ↩

37. In between are many different configurations or “dominants,” to use another Jakobsonian term, of metapragmatic calibration types. Think, thus, of the distinction of fictional narrative film (where the reflexive aspect of cinematic semiosis is denied for the nomic, with the reportive left minor) versus documentary (where the reportive aspect is the dominant, and the reflexive and nomic made minor) versus propaganda/didactic films (where the reflexive “you” of the audience-addressees and the enunciating-I of the film are dominant), or non-representational films which are swallowed up into the pure qualia of the image, a seeming negation of filmic deixis until we realize that each such film aspires to be rigidly designative of its maker (whose name inevitably appears to co-textualize and make an authorial claim on the image). In addition, we might consider the hybrid meta-combinations that are thereby also possible—fictional narratives in the generic mold of documentary (e.g., *The Blair Witch Project* [1999, dir. Daniel Myrick and Eduardo Sánchez]), documentaries that embed fictional narratives within them, didactic strategies in fiction (e.g., Steven Soderbergh's *The Laundromat* [2019])—as well as other complex alignments, such as the performative aura cultivated by the intertextual series of fictional narrative films involving onscreen/offscreen hero-stars such as Rajinikanth (also Dyer 1998[1979]). ↩

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