The Eye Substitutes Verbal Thinking

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As we barely see and hear inner dialogues on the screen, films have to invent a visual code in order to present states of mind. To do so, the only way of orientation leads along already given stereotypes from everyday life. And as films themselves are part of everyday life, they paradoxically represent another source of visual stereotypes.

Imagine the following scene: (Int. Flat – Night) Brian, 39, comes in. Switches the light on and dims it, letting down his suitcase and slowly taking of his coat. He is breathing deeply while walking towards the window, stopping to get himself a Whiskey from the table bar. We see his face as he glances through the window. He remains without any movement and expression.

This description doesn’t use any word referring to Brian’s inner state or prior experiences. Nevertheless, we can imagine that he has had a hard working day and that he worries about something. Or maybe he has had a usual working day but lost his girlfriend.

The assumptions can turn out right or wrong, but, in any case, we can figure out possible meanings of what we ‘see’. The main construction force of context and inner states is the tone of everyday actions. Imagine a usual action like washing up and search for unusual deviances.

Play with the speed, style, and expressions of everyday actions, and you will find out that the main conceptual and semantic side of images lies in their differences to the standard actions they represent.