Acta Universitatis Sapientiae

Film and Media Studies

Volume 5, 2012

Sapientia Hungarian University of Transylvania
Scientia Publishing House

Acta Universitatis Sapientiae
Film and Media Studies
Volume 5, 2012

Identities, Multiplications, and Immersive Landscapes

Contents

ACTA UNIV. SAPIENTIAE, FILM AND MEDIA STUDIES, 5 (2012) 7–20

The Age of Non-Reproducibility

Jens Schröter
University of Siegen (Germany)
E-mail: schroeter@medienwissenschaft.uni-siegen.de

Abstract. Ever since Walter Benjamin's famous essay *The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction*, it is a central idea of media theory – or approaches related to the field – that media enhance and accelerate reproduction and copying. Technologies like the copier, distributed since the 1960s add to this idea. The step from analogue to digital media seemed even more to be an increase in reproducibility. The difference between original and copy seemed to vanish at all. This loss of difference between original and copy is also a central topic in postmodernist theories of "simulation," which are especially connected to the name of Jean Buadrillard. The essay tries to sketch a short history of theories of reproducibility, copy and simulation – and to show their limits. Obviously, the permanent increase of reproducibility also needs an increase in technologies to prevent copying, e.g. in regard to money or documents like passports. So the history of reproducibility has a shadow: the history of techno-juridical ensembles of non-reproducibility.

The broad field of 20th century media theory debate is hardly something that lends itself to succinct summarising. One striking fact, however, is that 'reproducibility' is a recurring theme. What is seen as a distinguishing feature of technical media (since the emergence of photography and film, and in particular, the emergence of the new media) is that the content they store can easily be reproduced. And what is more, their content is designed to be reproducible; it seems as though the very difference between original and copy is becoming obsolete. This has been described by various theorists with varying emphasis as a specific feature and an objective of media development: Part 1. of this article will briefly present a few relevant positions. The mere existence, however, of terms such as *piracy* (cf. Yar 2005) or 'pirated copy,' and of campaigns against 'copyright pirates,' shows that reproducibility is not an unreservedly welcome phenomenon. Reproducibility clashes with the economic imperative of scarcity, and therefore with legal regulations. Thus judicial, technical and didactic procedures work together to prevent unauthorised reproduction – this is briefly outlined in Part 2. Finally, Part 3. offers a short conclusion.

1.

The obvious association evoked by the term 'reproducibility' is Walter Benjamin's well-known text, *The Work of Art in the Age of Its Mechanical Reproduction*, first published in French in 1936. It should be noted that Benjamin, thinking to diagnose a whole epoch, describes an '*age* of technological reproducibility' (as the better translation would be), one which, however, initially refers mainly to the work of art. He does stress that the work of art has always been manually reproducible, but: "Technological reproduction of the work of art is something else, something that has been practised intermittently through history, at widely separated intervals though with growing intensity" (Benjamin 2008, 3). Thus it seems that reproducibility has at least intensified in the modern period.

According to Benjamin, the results of this intensification are firstly "the most profound changes" in the impact of "traditional artworks" (Benjamin 2008, 5). Reproduction detaches the artwork from tradition and makes it "come closer to whatever situation the person apprehending it is in" (Benjamin 2008, 7); the exhibition value supplants the cult value. Secondly, he underlines this diagnosis by pointing to the emergence of art forms – photography and cinema – which are already structurally designed to be reproducible: "From a photographic plate, for instance, many prints can be made; the question of the genuine print has no meaning. However, the instant the criterion of genuineness in art production failed, the entire social function of art underwent an upheaval" [emphasis in the original] (Benjamin 2008, 12).

Benjamin's suggestion has been taken up repeatedly in recent debates on the subject. Rosalind Krauss, for example, wrote: "The structural change effected by photography's material base is that it is a medium of direct copies, where there exist multiples without an original" [emphasis in the original]. She takes this as evidence of a "totally new function of art" (Krauss 2001, 1002), arguing that the art of modernity cannot be understood without this recourse to photography as a multiple without an original (and the art of so-called postmodernity still less). She thus regarded the appropriative art forms of the 1980s, which worked closely with the strategy of the copy, as particularly important. She pointed to the work of artists such as Sherrie Levine, who had, for example, photographed the photos of Walker Evans and presented them as her own work.

But Benjamin had already noted that "its significance [i.e. that of reproducibility, J. S.] points beyond the realm of art" (2008, 7). And indeed: even without explicit recourse to Benjamin, comparable diagnoses were made elsewhere. Günther Anders, for example, had remarked on television reporting

in his 1956 text, Die Welt als Phantom und Matrize (The World as Phantom and as Matrix): "When the event in its reproduced form is socially more important than the original event, this original must be shaped with a view to being reproduced: in other words, the event becomes merely a master matrix, or a mold for casting its own reproduction" (Anders 1956, 20). Again, reproduction seems to be the signature of an epoch, replacing the 'original,' whatever that might be, and/or cancelling out the difference between original and reproduction. Admittedly, Anders was referring to television rather than to photography and film, and his attitude towards this change was marked by much greater cultural pessimism than Benjamin's.

Another similar but more affirmative diagnosis is found in the work of Jean Baudrillard, beginning in the mid 1970s. Very briefly: he formulates – partly with reference to Benjamin – a history of simulacra. His argument is that 'Western' societies, after a phase of imitation in the Renaissance and a phase of industrial production of identical objects, entered the era of 'hyperreal simulation' at some point (he does not specify when) in the 20th century (cf. Baudrillard 1993, esp. 70–76; on Benjamin, cf. e.g. 55–57). By 'simulation' – insofar as it is possible to precisely determine this in his sometimes confusing texts – Baudrillard does not mean (or only means in a metaphorical sense) the construction of performative models in computer simulation, which has become increasingly important, particularly in the military, in technology and science, since 1945 (cf. Schröter 2004a). Instead, his main contention, rather like Anders's (cf. Kramer 1998 on Baudrillard and Anders), is that reproduction has already secured a conclusive victory over the real, and that original and copy can therefore no longer be distinguished. If I understand correctly, he seems to argue that nowadays no substantial depth of reference can be assumed to exist behind the chains of signifiers pointing exclusively to other signifiers – political attitudes, for example, are becoming interchangeable lifestyle accessories. In any case, Kramer summarises as follows that: "simulation thus levels out the differences between original and copy, between the real and its reproduction, and in the end eradicates all references to the referent" (cf. 1998, 259).

Whatever one may think about individual aspects of this strident diagnosis, Baudrillard's texts were extensively discussed in the 1980s and early 1990s. It is probably no coincidence that a series of further publications on related issues followed in the 1990s and early 2000s. To name just two of these: Culture of the Copy is the title of a 1996 book by Hillel Schwartz. In 2004, a book entitled OriginalKopie. Praktiken des Sekundären (Original/Copy. Practices of the Secondary) was published in Cologne at the research centre for "Media and cultural communication," describing diverse forms and processes of reproduction (cf. Fehrmann et al. 2004). We can see, even beyond the question of originality

and its relationship to copy in art, an increasingly firm diagnosis that we live in an 'age of technological reproducibility,' a 'culture of the copy,' even the 'era of simulation.' And this diagnosis does seem plausible. Just a few examples, deliberately taken from a wide range of spheres:

a) Science: the sciences relevant for modernity are based on an epistemology of experiment (however problematic this may be), in which the reality of a theory can only be confirmed if an effect is reproducible. Baudrillard wrote: "The very definition of the real is that of which it is possible to provide an equivalent reproduction" (1993, 73). In this sense, reality depends on its reproducibility.

b) Material production: the industrial manufacturing of goods surrounds us with an abundance of largely identical copies, e.g. of chairs. These obviously follow a reproducible prototype. Andy Warhol gave a well-known, ironic commentary on this development with endless series of Campbell's soup tins and Brillo boxes.

c) Production of signs: reproducible photography covers the world with identical-looking photos. Then, of course, we all use photocopiers to duplicate written documents or pictures, a development Benjamin could not have foreseen. And finally, the emergence of digital media really seems to have brought about the collapse of the difference between original and copy. Digital data is, on a basal level, just a sequence of zeros and ones, and if one simply copies this sequence (or if a computer does), the resulting file is exactly the same as the original. Unlike analogue processes, copying no longer causes a loss in quality, distancing the copy from the original. The difference becomes obsolete. Indeed, the argument initially seems more convincing for digital data than for photography (the focus of Benjamin's and subsequently Krauss's theses); most photographic procedures, after all, still distinguish between an original negative and the positive prints.

This, then, is the grand narrative recounted by certain representatives of media theory: we are entering an 'age of reproducibility' in which everything and everyone will soon be able to be reproduced – and the difference between original and copy will thereby collapse. Thus, for example, Geoffrey Batchen also claims: "We are entering a time when it will no longer be possible to tell any original from its simulations" (2000, 10). Cinema and television are full of corresponding phantasms, particularly in the case of science fiction. There are the fantasies of genetic reproduction, suggesting that we will soon be able to create identical clones of dinosaurs, humans, etc. Or phantasms of virtual simulation, in which future computers will be able to reproduce the world in its materiality – just think of the 'holodeck' from the popular American television series Star Trek – The Next Generation (1987–1994) or, of course, the film The

Matrix (Andy and Lana Wachowski, 1999) (cf. Schröter 2004b, 152–276). The simulations shown here are (almost) as real as reality; the difference between original and copy becomes meaningless.

2.

Having followed this idea to its final, phantasmatic climax, a critical commentary on this grand narrative is pertinent, and several points of departure offer themselves here. From a historical point of view, for example, we can ask whether culture has not always been based on the reproducibility of linguistic signs; thus reproducibility is not exclusively correlating with technical or new media. One should also draw attention to the historical contingency of reproducibility as an attribute of certain technical media: photography, for example, is not reproducible 'in itself,' there have also been non-reproducible photographic processes (daguerreotype, polaroid, etc.).

The thesis that we live in an age of technological reproducibility can be criticised from another angle point, too. The thesis is: the expansion of reproducibility – regardless of whether the principle has always existed or not – into an increasingly broad range of subject areas inevitably entails the emergence of strategies of non-reproducibility. The description of modernity as an age of ever increasing reproducibility is not false, but one-sided. Modernity is also the age of technological non-reproducibility. Especially if, like Anders or Baudrillard, one takes this as evidence that the difference between original and copy is imploding – or has imploded.

For it is obvious that this difference still exists on an everyday level, despite the expansion of analogue and digital technical media: The reproduction of e.g. money, secret documents, and identity documents is prohibited for all but certain institutions. Otherwise the criteria for their 'authenticity' – and this means nothing less than their operability – would be nullified. These types of documents function on the basis of a distinction between original and copy – a copied banknote is no longer a banknote. Of course, there is a history of "unauthorised reproduction,"[1] as it is explicitly called in the relevant guidelines in the European central bank, and the counterfeiting of coins, for example, has long attracted severe penalties (cf. Voigtlaender 1976). There are legal regulations against certain forms of reproducibility – regulations which find expression in pejorative terms such as 'pirated copy' or 'piracy.'

1 EZB/2003/4, *http://www.ecb.int/ecb/legal/pdf/l_07820030325de00160019.pdf.*

But the legal penalty always comes after the fact. When it comes to the currency system, the damage must be prevented in advance, since large-scale counterfeiting would lead to inflation and could even bring about an economic collapse. Because of these dangers, increasing efforts were made in the 20th century to delegate the legal prohibition to technical – and sometimes legally protected – processes, simply to cope with the increase in reproducibility. One way in which reproducibility has increased is the spread of photocopiers since the 1960s.

Parallel to this increase, new types of non-reproducible markings have been devised, or old techniques, such as the watermark (cf. Gerstengarbe et al. 2010), have been resurrected – watermarks are also found on banknotes. But such technical processes as watermarks only work if the subjects concerned – i.e. all of us – know how to decipher the marks denoting authenticity – hence the mass distribution of information about physical and attentional techniques which help to detect forgeries.

The German police advice website polizei-beratung.de gives information on a holographic 'special patch' on the lower right hand side of the 50 euro note: "On the right of the front of the note is a special patch. If you move the banknote, then depending on the angle of viewing either the value of the note or the architectural motif depicted on the note appears in changing colours as a hologram [...]."[2] So one is supposed to learn how to move the banknote, and what to pay attention to in order to be able to distinguish genuine from fake, original from copy. The hologram added to the banknote, which changes its appearance in the light and which cannot be photocopied – e.g. with a modern colour copier – helps achieve this.

To support this aim, the website provides a Java applet with the name 'Euro-Blüten-Trainer' ('fake euro trainer,' sometimes translated as 'funny money advisor') [Fig. 1.]. Here, applying comparative visual analysis in a way Heinrich Wölfflin would surely never have imagined, one can learn to recognise the crucial security markings on banknotes. "Train your gaze to 'incorruptible inspector' standard." Similar training software with corresponding short films can be found on the website of the German Federal Bank.

This didactic endeavour also includes film and poster campaigns such as "Copyright pirates are criminals" [Fig. 2.]. These and similar disciplinary paratexts are important since – and this brings us back to the legal side – there are severe penalties (prison sentences of up to five years) even for unknowingly passing on counterfeit money. These paratexts interpellate all of us, alerting us

2 *http://www.polizei-beratung.de/attension_ressources/downloads/infotexte/Falschgeldkriminalitaet.doc.*

to our duty of learning the physical and attentional techniques which will help us recognise legally protected technical effects that signal the criminal offence of unauthorised reproduction of money or documents.

For this reason, counterfeiters try to distribute their fake notes in chaotic, hectic situations where there is too little time and/or light for a thorough examination. In summary: the aim is to prevent unauthorised reproduction with a heterogeneous combination of three components:

(1) legal threats and the institutional conditions which allow them to function: the legal-institutional complex;
(2) technical effects which cannot be reproduced by the general public (e.g. holograms);
(3) physical or attentional techniques focused on the special effects provided by the technical processes at (2), in order to recognise the differences between authorised and unauthorised reproduction defined according to (1).

This heterogeneous configuration, designed to stabilise what one might call the reproductive difference between original and copy, appears in a wide variety of areas. I will outline just a few of these.

In the area of material commodities, there is product counterfeiting. At the beginning of 2009, a group of secondary school students from Lübeck went on a fatal drinking spree in Kemer, on the Mediterranean coast of Turkey, drinking raki laced with methanol. Following this incident the Süddeutsche Zeitung of 3 April 2009 reported on problems with the counterfeiting of raki in Turkey, and more precisely on "2005, the year of the raki crisis," in which one incident stands out in particular: "First of all, 500,000 holograms, which were supposed to be attached to bottles to guarantee the authenticity of the liquor, were stolen from a raki distillery in Izmir" (transl. from Strittmatter 2009, 10).

Two points can be deduced from this. Firstly: even if Baudrillard may be right in thinking that industrial mass production of goods has led to an unprecedented spread of identical series of objects, this does not necessarily nullify the distinction between original and copy (cf. the example of machine construction: Paul 2010). Secondly: holograms are mentioned again here, as in the discussion of banknotes above. Holography is one of a number of irreproducible photographic processes, designed to curb reproducibility in conjunction with corresponding legal institutions and physical techniques. An original hologram is easy to recognise due to its specific visual features, and no copier can copy it in such a way that these features remain intact. The fact that there are small, identical holograms on many banknotes shows that holographs can be reproduced in certain circumstances, but not by the general public.

Reproducibility is not something that exists or does not exist; it is present in a graduated and variously distributed state (cf. Schröter 2009).

As already mentioned, one of the most important areas in which reproducibility must be contained and reduced, is that of documents pertaining to governmental and economic structures. Money and identity documents, etc. must only be duplicated or produced by the appropriate institutions. These documents are generally to be found in wallets. You, dear reader, can understand this easily: you have, in your wallet, firstly your identity documents, and secondly money or cards which you can access money with. You can easily verify the vital importance of this archive of non-reproducible elements for your economic and political existence, i.e. your existence as a bourgeois and citoyen. Go to a bank without a credit card or identity card and try to get money. Try to travel to another country without a passport – it might work, but bad luck if you strike a checkpoint. You can claim that you are creditworthy as often as you want, and cry all you like – no one will believe you unless you can present a real credit card or a real passport. You would be considered highly suspicious if you dared to present a photocopy of your passport (or your credit card). You are only 'yourself' by virtue of your original documents.

A clear difference does emerge here, though: in the case of money, you have to be able to recognise, e.g., a fake 50 euro note, i.e. you have to learn to distinguish it from other 50 euro notes. But you come across a lot of 50 euro notes, i.e. you have to learn to tell genuine copies from fake copies. With your ID card, the situation is somewhat different. It is only allocated to you, and, of course, it would make no sense to distribute numerous copies of it. I can scarcely use a copy of someone else's ID card to prove my identity, however good the copy may be. Here the non-reproducibility of the ID card is connected to the prototype of my signature and face. My signature and the photo of my face connect me and my identity document indexically (this also applies to biometric data).[3] My face and my signature have to match the face and signature on the document – and vice versa. Thus the prototype has to be reproduced, but it is fixed on a document which is rigorously protected against unauthorised production, by having security features which cannot readily be reproduced. This shows that it is not a matter of playing reproducibility and non-reproducibility off against each other, but of observing their actual

3 The indexicality of the signature is also demonstrated by the fact that, e.g., erasable pencils are not 'acceptable for use on official documents,' since the trace can be deleted or changed (cf. *http://de.wikipedia.org/wiki/Dokumenten echtheit*). A particularly strange phenomenon, which we cannot go into here, is the so-called 'facsimile signature stamp,' i.e. a stamp which imitates a hand-written signature as closely as possible.

configurations, historically, culturally, even situationally. This essay is just a preliminary attempt to chart this difficult terrain.

The ID card, which I cannot validly produce myself, assigns my face, and therefore my body, to my name. And this ID card can only be allocated to the specific, i.e. addressable person, by the approved governmental body. A person can be defined as a living body + an identity document.[4] Much the same can be said for staff ID cards, company ID cards or military ID cards. Access to certain institutions or resources can only be obtained through such processes of identification; this is why 'identity theft' (cf. Hoofnagle 2007) is now a key crime in the areas of espionage, industrial espionage, illegal immigration and emigration.

While every banknote in a series shows the same reference, e.g. 50 euros, the singular reference is the difference between ID cards. The issue with ID cards is therefore to distinguish a fake from a genuine original. Strictly speaking, every banknote is also an original, since it has a singular number, but here the question is always whether a given banknote is a valid copy of its prototype. Besides, as users in practice, we do not really have any opportunity to check whether the number is correct – e.g. by visiting a bank. Hence we can and generally must disregard this singularity and differentiate, in the case of banknotes, between fake and genuine copies.[5] This strange expression may cause discomfort – perhaps it would be better to say 'authorised' and 'unauthorised' copies – but, from the point of view of the authorising bodies, this is the same as the difference between genuine and fake.[6]

In the art system, of course, the distinction between original and copy is still maintained. This is particularly evident in the 'vintage print' in photography, a

4 It is not customary to possess ID cards in every country or culture, though – this should be made the subject of a comparative cultural study on the production of identity. In the conditions of modern mass societies, however, some sort of mechanisms of identification are generally necessary, cf. the very detailed overview at: *http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Identity_document*.

5 Both Jochen Venus and Timo Schemer-Reinhard have raised the question of whether it would be better to speak of banknotes as 'specimens' or 'examples' (in German: 'Exemplare') rather than 'copies.' This question is quite justified, but it raises the further question of how to distinguish between 'example' and 'copy' – a difficult question which can only be hinted at here. The first problem is that the distinction may only be possible in certain languages – what is referred to as an 'Exemplar' of a book in German is simply called a 'copy' in English.

6 In an email of 14 November 2009, Jochen Venus objected: "The distinction between a 'genuine copy' and a 'fake' one seems to me to be contrary to the meaning of the term copy. I don't think you would talk about a fake imitation either." And yet, clearly, this difference does exist, as one can see from the phenomenon of 'certified copies' of documents issued by administrative bodies (cf. *http://de.wikipedia.org/wiki/Beglaubigung*).

practice which would undoubtedly have seemed very peculiar to Walter Benjamin, and would probably also strike Rosalind Krauss as odd. The first print made from the negative by the photographer is valued higher than every subsequent reproduction, and there are always conflicts about the secure documentation of these processes. It is, furthermore, standard practice today for photographers to make just a few prints of their photos – sometimes even destroying the negative after producing the prints – to ensure that only a small number of copies are in circulation. Thus even the works of Appropriation Art, which Krauss valued so highly, have now become expensive originals.

In the digital field, too – and especially here – the reproductive difference is continually being reconstructed. Precisely because a loss-free reproduction could theoretically diminish the difference between original and copy (if one disregards the frequent need to compress data, thus entailing losses [cf. Salomon 2008]), the frantic efforts to rebuild this distinction are redoubled. In the digital realm, increased reproducibility seems liable to break down the object's nature as a commodity and thus the very condition that makes an economy possible. A digital commodity – software, a film, music – can be reproduced any number of times. This has a huge negative impact on its commercialisability if the digital commodity is reproduced by users rather than producers.

But the problem is even more fundamental: whether I hand over a piece of software for money or for free, I always keep a copy. No exchange takes place, and thus the object's nature as a commodity seems questionable (cf. Grassmuck 2004).[7] Again: strict laws and their institutions of enforcement, complicated technical processes – think of digital rights management[8] or copy protection systems for DVDs (cf. Heilmann 2010) and audio CDs (cf., for example, Wöhner 2005) – and physical and attentional techniques are supposed to prevent the technical potential of digital technologies from becoming usable, because this potential is not compatible with the economic principles which are currently in place.

7 See an article by Stefan Meretz on the trial to stabilise the commodity-form in digital media: *http://www.opentheory.org/kampfumdiewarenform/krisis_31_meretz.pdf*.

8 On DRM, see the wealth of information on the website *http://waste.informatik.hu-berlin.de/Grassmuck/drm/*. On the problem of law relating to digital media, cf. Boehme-Neßler (2008).

3.

Reproducibility presents a fundamental threat to the existing governmental and economic structures of modern societies; I believe Benjamin saw this much correctly, albeit in a different way.[9] Hence the emergence of dramatic terms such as piracy (cf. Yar 2005). To combat these threats, a heterogeneous ensemble of (a) special technological processes (such as holography), (b) legal regulations and (c) attentional techniques, is constructed. I call this the 'heterogeneous ensemble of reproductive difference.' It is intended to stabilise the differences between genuine and fake originals, and between genuine and fake copies.

The heterogeneous ensemble of reproductive difference is a mode of – to borrow Foucault's use of the term (1981, 58) – "rarefaction," without which neither the circulation of money, nor personal identity, nor the circulation of goods can be maintained. Such rarefactions seem, depending on the individual practice or subsystem, to be a more or less urgent necessity. It is nonsense to claim that the difference between original and copy is now obsolete. Whole industries, which earn their money by preventing copies and thus stabilising originals, have sprung up.

Some of the media theories, which this article began with, tend to consider the potential of technologies in an abstract way, separate from their social context, and thus draw overstated and one-sided conclusions about their effects. The reproducibility of some forms of photography, for example, leads them to announce an 'age' in which reproducibility conquers all. But the age of technological reproducibility is also the age of technical non-reproducibility. There seem to be social structures or imperatives which are more powerful than changes in media technology, but which, nonetheless, have to respond to these changes (cf. Winston 1998, 1–18). It remains to be seen how this struggle will end.

References

Anders, Günther. 1956. The World as Phantom and as Matrix. *Dissent* no. 3: 14–24.

Batchen, Geoffrey. 2000. Ectoplasm. Photography in the Digital Age. In *Over Exposed, Essays on Contemporary Photography*, ed. Carol Squiers, 9–23. New York: The New Press.

9 Benjamin hoped that reproducibility would encourage socialist transformations of society.

Baudrillard, Jean. 1993 [1976]. *Symbolic Exchange and Death*. London: Sage.
Benjamin, Walter. 2008 [1936]. *The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction*. London: Penguin.
Boehme-Neßler, Volker. 2008. *Unscharfes Recht. Überlegungen zur Relativierung des Rechts in der digitalisierten Welt*. Berlin: Duncker & Humblot.
Fehrmann, Gisela et al., eds. 2004. *OriginalKopie: Praktiken des Sekundären*. Köln: Dumont.
Foucault, Michel. 1981 [1970]. The Order of Discourse. In *Untying the Text. A Post-Structuralist Reader*, ed. Robert Young, 48–78. Boston: Routledge.
Gerstengarbe, Carina et al. 2010. Wasserzeichen. Vom 13. Jahrhundert bis zum Digital Watermarking. In *Kulturen des Kopierschutzes II*, eds. Jens Schröter et al., 9–62. Siegen: universi.
Grassmuck, Volker. 2004. *Freie Software: zwischen Privat- und Gemeineigentum*. Bonn: Bundeszentrale für politische Bildung.
Heilmann, Till. 2010. Digitale Codierung und Repräsentation. DVD, CSS, DeCSS. In *Kulturen des Kopierschutzes II*, eds. Jens Schröter et al., 95–112. Siegen: universi.
Hoofnagle, Chris Jay. 2007. Identity Theft. Making the Known Unknowns Known. *Harvard Journal of Law & Technology* vol. 21 no. 1: 98–122.
Kramer, Wolfgang. 1998. *Technokratie als Entmaterialisierung der Welt: Zur Aktualität der Philosophien von Günther Anders und Jean Baudrillard*. Münster: Waxmann.
Krauss, Rosalind. 2001. 1959, 9 January. The Ministry of Fate. In *A New History of French Literature*, ed. Denis Hollier, 1000–1006. Cambridge/MA:Harvard University Press.
Paul, Holger. 2010. Hologramme auf die Maschinen. Um sich vor Plagiatoren zu schützen, setzen die deutschen Maschinenbauer vor allem auf technologischen Vorsprung. Das reicht nicht aus, findet ihr Verband. *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung* no. 15 (19 January): 20.
Salomon, David. 2008. *A Concise Introduction to Data Compression*. London: Springer.
Schröter, Jens. 2004a. Computer/Simulation. Kopie ohne Original oder das Original kontrollierende Kopie? In: *OriginalKopie. Praktiken des Sekundären*, eds. Gisela Fehrmann et al., 139–155. Köln: Dumont.
Schröter, Jens. 2004b. *Das Netz und die virtuelle Realität. Zur Selbstprogrammierung der Gesellschaft durch die universelle Maschine*. Bielefeld: Transcript.
Schröter, Jens. 2009. Das holographische Wissen und die technische Nicht-Reproduzierbarkeit. In *Das holographische Wissen*, eds. Stefan Rieger and Jens Schröter, 77–86. Berlin: diaphanes.

Schwartz, Hillel. 1996. *The Culture of the Copy: Striking Likenesses, Unreasonable Facsimiles*. New York: Zone Books.

Strittmatter, Kai. 2009. Selbstgebranntes Gift. In der Türkei sterben öfter Menschen, weil sie gepanschten Alkohol trinken – der Tod eines deutschen Schülers ist kein Einzelfall. *Süddeutsche Zeitung* no. 78 (03. 04. 2009): 10.

Voigtlaender, Heinz. 1976. *Falschmünzer und Münzfälscher: Geschichte der Geld-fälschung aus 2½ Jahrtausenden*. Münster/WF: Numismatischer Verlag Dombrowski.

Winston, Brian. 1998. *Media, Technology and Society. A History from the Telegraph to the Internet*. London: Routledge.

Wöhner, Thomas. 2005. Analyse und Bewertung von Kopierschutzverfahren für Audio-CDs. In *Sicherheit 2005*, ed. Hannes Federrath, 175–188. Bonn: Gesellschaft für Informatik.

Yar, Majid. 2005. The Global 'Epidemic' of Movie 'Piracy': Crimewave or Social Construction? *Media, Culture and Society* vol. 27 no. 5: 677–696.

List of Figures

Figure 1. Euro-Blüten-Trainer ('funny money advisor'), screenshot. (*http://bluetentrainer.polizei-beratung.de/blueten_euro/ trainer_d.html*)

Figure 2. *"Raubkopierer sind Verbrecher"* (Copyright pirates are criminals).

ACTA UNIV. SAPIENTIAE, FILM AND MEDIA STUDIES, 5 (2012) 21–34

The Nomads of Media and Family Histories. Rethinking the Moving Images of Families in the Age of User-Generated Content

Melinda Blos-Jáni
Sapientia University (Romania)
E-mail: blosmelinda@gmail.com

Abstract. The title is referencing Hans Belting's differentiation between image and medium: "images resemble nomads in the sense that they take residence in one medium after another" (Belting 2005, 310). This paper tries to build a methodolgical framework for the research of the nomadic behaviour of home imagery in the new media age. While the practice of home movies was theorised in the age of the celluloid film and so-called 'nuclear family', the refinement of these approaches occurred at the beginning of the 1990s, with the emergence of video technology. However, the literature of the new media reported the turning point-like changes of the habitus of amateur films: the home movie is just one of the amateur filmmaking habitus, neither more typical, nor more representative than any other practices. The technological, social, and cultural dimensions of the previous ritualised practice need to be rethought in this context. How have the content, status, and functions of the home movies regarded as places of memory changed in the age of presentist do-it-yourself media products? The paper argues that home movies and videos should be regarded as historical sources of the participative culture.

As visual anthropology has become a discipline, a legitimate field of cultural anthropology, this process has been accompanied by debates on mediality, among which most famously Margaret Mead's pamphlet-like essay in which she defined the place of visual anthropology within "the discipline of words" (Mead 1975). In the "founding texts" of the discipline written in the 1970s and in its subsequent expositions as well,[1] three branches of visual anthropology have been distinguished: "1. the study of visual manifestations of culture-facial expression, body movement, dance, body adornment, the symbolic use of space, architecture, and the built environment; 2. the study of pictorial aspects of

1 For example, in Chalfen and Ruby's 1973 conference lecture (Chalfen and Ruby 1974, 5) or in Jay Ruby's historical overviews on visual anthropology and encyclopedia articles (Ruby 1989 and 1996).

culture from cave paintings to photographs, film, television, home video, and so on; 3. the use of pictorial media to communicate anthropological knowledge" (Ruby 1989, 10).

In everyday use, the expression visual anthropology has multiple meanings; however, most often it is still used to denote the third field, as a synonym of ethnographic or anthropological film, therefore, in Jay Ruby's view, the cultural or historical approaches to the everyday use of pictorial media should be called the anthropology of visual communication (Ruby 2001).[2] Although the history of anthropological film also yields perspectives to the interpretation and appropriation of moving images in the home mode,[3] in my paper I rather intend to build a theoretical approach based on the statements of the anthropology of visual communication (later to be used in the interpretation of the ethnographical field research I have conducted).

Theories of visual communication, similar to the theories of social representation or visual representation, are characterized by constructivist approaches. While the first anthropological analyses of home photos and movies appeared, the examination of representations was dominated by semiotic approaches which concentrated on images as systems of symbols, as artefacts. In comparison, the investigators of visual communication distinguished representation from its social use, and examined its semiotic aspects: what symbolic systems, what meanings regulate the formation and interpretation of representations?

2 In a study published in 1980 with the title *Margaret Mead and the Shift from Visual Anthropology to the Anthropology of Visual Communication*, Sol Worth claims that besides the images about culture, attention should also be paid to the images of culture.

3 According to film histories and theories, the appearance of subjectivity in documentaries is connected to the postmodern turn of (written) anthropology. In this sense, the status of representation becomes problematic: ethnographic texts are not to be regarded as documents, but rather as tools of meditation, close to the genre of the literary essay. Applying this to anthropological films raises further questions: how can the object of the ethnographic text, namely the observed, become the subject of representation? How can the hierarchy and power relationship between the authority of the observer/filmmaker possessing the tools of representation and the observed, which is in an inferior position relative to the former, be dissolved or reversed? This problem is very often dissolved by anthropologists/filmmakers exactly by the means of private film, or amateur film, occasionally also referred to as navajo or indigenous filmmaking (Renov 2004). For example, Ross McElwee's *Sherman's March* (1986) presents the process of how the project of a historical documentary film fails and turns into an autobiographical one. In another example, in Tamás Almási's *Basement* (*Alagsor*, 2001), the camera is placed in the hands of youngsters living in suburban blocks of flats who have decided to move down to the basements and spend most of their time hanging around.

Anthropologist Richard Chalfen, theoretician of home visual media,[4] raises similar questions when, following Sol Worth and Dell Hymes, he approaches the use of photos and movies as a symbolic activity, from the point of view of socio-linguistics (Chalfen 1987, 4–48). Starting from Sol Worth's concept of symbolic environment and Nelson Goodman's constructivist philosophy, he understands the family collections of photos and movies as a construed world comprehensible by the analysis of the symbolic system underlying the content, form, and use of the pictures. In this perspective, the pictures are not "copies of reality," they do not become interesting on account of their reference value, but as visual statements. The author is less interested in the pictures themselves, much rather in the communication achieved by them and its pattern created in the social space of the home, which he calls "home mode pictorial communication" (Chalfen 1987, 6–9).

Chalfen analyses this type of communication by methods of the ethnography of speaking. He extends and generalises Dell Hymes's sociolinguistic model to various aspects of human communication, among which to visual communication as well. Starting from the four basic questions of Hymes's theory,[5] Chalfen elaborated his own framework that he termed sociodivistic, in order to thoroughly describe the complex activity of taking photographs or filming. These partial processes are as follows: planning, behaviour behind the camera, behaviour in front of the camera, editing, presentation. In his description, these partial processes are connected to the following five factors of communication: participants, environment, subject, form of the message, code (Chalfen 1987, 19–20). According to this, the various events or factors, forming a matrix-like system, are connected among themselves in twenty-five ways.[6] He thinks that this could serve as a descriptive framework for inquiries about the actual behaviour of people: because, while we can record almost anything, we do not

4 Home visual media is a distinctive subgroup of home media: "home visual media consist of mediated forms of audio-visual communication that are created in private, personal ways and meant for personal and private consumption. In this sense, *home* may be best understood as a metaphor – relieving us of the absolute necessity of always referring to home media as made or used literally in that moving target known as *home*" (Chalfen 2002, 143). In his approach, home visual media consists of: snapshots, photograph albums, scrapbooks, home movies, home videos, framed photographs, videotaped letters, etc.

5 "What are the communicative events, and their components in a community? What are the relationships among them? What capabilities and states do they have, in general, and in particular events? How do they work?" (Chalfen 1987, 17–18).

6 This number appears slightly modified with the authors who reconsidered this method, on the basis of how they grouped the communication events (see Musello 1984, 28).

actually do record everything.[7] He coins the term Kodak culture to denote the behavioural patterns thus revealed by the research of visual communication, and Polaroid people for the representations of life that appear in images and can be revealed by content analysis (Chalfen 1987, 10–11). The author uses three examples to present the methodology of the ethnography of speaking adapted for home visual communication. The chapter which analyses the home movies most formally applies the sociodivistic interpretive framework (touching upon all section points of the matrix); this is followed by the account of the patterns of snapshots (what kind of symbolic forms does the photographic presentation of the individual's life-course draw up? [Chalfen 1987, 75]); then by tourist photography in the context of tourist culture.

The French theoretician of home movies, Roger Odin also applies Dell Hymes's communication theory, but he is not so much interested in communication forms within the family, but in the types of communication with moving images. The semio-pragmatic approach that he elaborated mixes the methods of semiotics and pragmatics, and interprets the constructedness of a text not as an immanent feature, but starting from its pragmatics: he studies the modalities of filmic texts as they change in relation to context.

The semio-pragmatic pattern implies two interpretive levels: the first level deals with the modes of producing meaning and emotional effect, while the second level is contextual. According to Odin, the modalities determine the communication spaces or discourses construable by the viewer. In his model, he distinguishes nine modalities, the last of these is the home mode,[8] which makes possible the re-living of past events individually or in a group (Odin 2008, 255). In his approach, the home movie does not communicate, it does not work as a representation, but rather as an index, which makes the process of memory possible (2008, 259). The home movie is not edited as a text, it is a fragment rather than a text (Odin 2010, 41).

Home movies cannot be compared to professional filmmaking since they are not cinema, that is, the communication field of a home movie should not be

7 This is an appropriation of Dell Hymes's line of questioning: "which rules of proscription and prescription constitute a system in the community by providing that it is not the case that anyone can say anything to anyone in any form by any channel in any code in any setting of time and place" (Hymes 1967, 26.; see Chalfen 1987, 18).

8 The other eight modes described in this model are: "the spectacular mode (the film as spectacle); the fictionalizing mode (a film as the thrill of fictively recounted events); the fabulizing mode (the film's story demonstrates an intended lesson); the documentarist mode (the film informs about realities in the world); the argumeantative/persuasive mode (to analyze a discourse); the artistic mode (the film as the work of an author); the energetic mode (the rhythm of images and sounds stirs the spectator)" (Odin 2008, 255).

looked for in a cinematographic space, but in family space. From the point of view of pragmatics, it is a trivial thing that we recognize anew: the home movie is something "unsuccessful – mal fait –" (non-narrative, non-constructed, non-designed), but it works nonetheless. Whoever films the family moment, they do not regard themselves as professional filmmakers, and do not look for the possibilities for self-expression. The real author of a home movie is the institution of the family (Odin 2010, 40–45). Odin describes the textual construct of the home movie with the features of a bad, unsuccessful movie which can fulfil its functions precisely because of its shortcomings. The lack of coherence and design has a positive role, since it can stimulate the process of remembering, the family members must work together in order to be able to reconstruct the family stories, and the common story edition enforces group cohesion (Odin 2010, 52). Therefore the addressee of a home movie is not the viewer, but the participant (Odin 2010, 53), and the projection of a home movie resembles more a happening than a movie performance (Odin 2010, 55). This way the home movie has become the utmost example of semio-pragmatics: this is the par excellance modality which, in addition to being understood only by its pragmatics, behaves as an interpretable text only in communicational situations.

The application of Dell Hymes's sociolinguistics to the field of visual communi-cation research seems feasible; still, it needs to be completed at certain points if we wish to apply it to home video practices of our days. Amateur filmmaking in the 1920s was mostly structured by its symbiosis with celluloid film and nuclear family; however, by now these institutions have gone through several changes. The recent cultural criticism reminds us that the patterns of home visual communication have reached turning points or breaches, such as the dissemination of video technology and the "new media" age. This challenges us to rethink the patterns of our home media, to reflect on the dynamics of the institution of the family and of technologies, on the changes of lifestyle and communication concomitantly.

The approaches of Chalfen and Odin identify the home movie with its functions, implying that cultural meanings are essential ingredients of this form of communi-cation. The analysis of the context of communication remains in the background, the medial differences are blurred: Chalfen, for example, places home movies, snapshots and tourist photos next to each other in order to present home visual communication. Furthermore, the changes of the media technologies also remained unreflected: firstly, because he formulated his communication theory against technological determinism and aestheticism.[9]

9 Chalfen has repeatedly emphasised the exclusion of these approaches, justifying it with the primacy of the communication theoretical approach.

Secondly, his research focussed only on analogue images shot on filmstrip, but meanwhile, as his results were published in book form, video technology became widespread, and with it, the question of medium specificity together with its social aspects has once again become a timely one.

Despite his paradigmatic methodological statements, Chalfen seems to schematise his subject: he draws up an ideal typical, homogeneous robot-picture of the American society's Kodak-culture, while failing to suggest the existence of local or strata cultures or subjective intentions; similarly, he also avoids to discuss the applicability of his method for individual cases. Although the presented method argues for the rich documentation of pictures and the anthropological possibilities of their interpretation, the conclusions seem, nevertheless, to overgeneralise, precisely because of the researcher's attempts for abstractions. The chapter dealing with the functions of home pictures (it enlists, in a quite monolithic way, documentation, preservation, memory, and socialisation, or attachment to places and material goods) may remind us of András Bán's ironic observations. In one of his studies, Bán summarises the main questions and results of the research of home photography as follows: "they examined how far the family's self-image, internal system and hierarchy appears on these images (the answer: more in the past, less today). They wanted to know whether the norms of conduct and behaviour defined by the family or the small community appeared on the images. (Of course). […] They asked how far were photos the objects, helpers, starting points of family history? (The answer: it depends on the narrator)." He objects to the fact that the well-established, systematic analytical methods of the particular cultural phenomenon have excluded from their discourse that what he calls, following Jacques Maquet, "functional aestheticism:" "What these texts do not speak about: is that poetical, aesthetic act which happens nonetheless on contemplating these pictures (somewhere far away from any understanding of art); the instance which, albeit for a second, 'eases people's innate bad fate'" (Bán 2000, 26–27).

One could also understand András Bán's observation as a display of the shortcomings of these communication patterns: they fail to take into account that in the course or as a part of communication, the act of seeing, contemplation also takes place (or perhaps this is what their use is about). In a different approach: although it may seem that Hymes's pattern can be applied to social communication in general, it, nevertheless, implies the metaphor of the world as a text. The criticism of the visual culture reminds us that: "visual culture is a tactic with which to study the genealogy, definition and functions of postmodern everyday life from the point of view of the consumer, rather than the producer. The disjunctured and fragmented culture that we call postmodernism is best imagined

and understood visually, just as the nineteenth century was classically represented in the newspaper and the novel" (Mirzoeff 1999, 3). Mirzoeff quotes Mitchell, according to whom picture theory "stems from the realization that spectatorship (the look, the gaze, the glance, the practices of observation, surveillance and visual pleasure) may be as deep a problem as various froms of reading (decipherment, decoding, interpretation, etc.) and that 'visual experience' or 'visual literacy' might not be fully explicable in the model of textuality" (Mitchell 1994, 16). Thus we have to inquire "the modern tendency to picture or visualize existence" (Mirzoeff 1999, 5).

Further criticism was also addressed to the social theory of the images, implied by the presented semiotic approaches. If Chalfen's sociodivistic method is not treated in a normative manner, but rather as a heuristic starting point,[10] then one could in fact access the narrow (family) context, a momentary snapshot about the family life of the images. The methods of socio-pragmatics also reveal the narrated family history and memory, the family as an institution. However, this communication pattern has not much to do with the modelling factor of these images outside of this restricted social area: the broader context of social history, the historical changes, and those situations of communication that a picture can possibly go through in the long run, in the course of its social life.

Patricia R. Zimmarmann's criticism of Chalfen's book draws on much the same objections: she thinks that this approach based on family communication offers an image of family photos which may make us conclude that it is a self-regulating, self-identical practice, opposing public or industrial, commercial discourses. In her work on the social history of home movies (Reel Families. A Social History of Amateur Film), she performs discourse analysis: the practice of amateur film becomes a construct which, besides the institution of the family, can also be created by the ideology of the dominant media practice, and also by social power relations in general. In Patricia Zimmermann's interpretation, the family communication according to Chalfen (intentions, desires, functions) also becomes a construct of ideologies.[11] In her opinion,

10 The events taking place between the taking and the watching of the picture could be so distant in time, and could involve so many participants that they can hardly be researched in vivo, taking all their aspects into consideration. The retrospective accounts of these instances may highly differ from the explanations given during or after the events taking place. This is not merely a difference in research methodology, since the ensuing accounts do not speak of events, but of representations of events.

11 Zimmermann tries to explain in fact how home movies have become the dominant type of amateur filmmaking. She unravels such kind of (mainly commercial) discourses which subordinate the amateur film to the ideology of the family, obscuring thus methods of filmmaking which could have ended up as alternatives of cinema, of industrial film production.

amateur film is best characterised not by the static pattern based on family communication (as in the essentialist approaches), but one must start from the effect of changing power- and social relations (from external influences and contexts), and describe their diachronically changing relations (Zimmermann 1995, x).

Although Zimmermann treats new problems when she describes the family embeddedness of amateur filmmaking not as an evidence but as a discursive process, this ideological thesis, however, obliterates the difference between discourses and practice (for a criticism on this, see Moran 2002, 52–54). As an alternative solution, James Moran argues for a thesis which he deduces from Pierre Bourdieu's concepts of habitus and social field. The concept of habitus creates a kind of in-betweenness, it explains the various kinds of practices as being shaped by different discourses and empirically documented individual (in our case family) decisions alike: "the concept of habitus is relational in that it designates a mediation between objective structures and practices. […] Social reality exists, so to speak, twice, in things and in minds, in fields and in habitus, outside and inside of agents. […] The theory of habitus, again, allows us to overcome a whole series of antinomies into which the theory of action routinely locks itself, those of consciusness and the 'thingness' of social facts, of mechanicalism and finalism, of subjective teleology and objective teleology" (Bourdieu and Wacquant 1989, 43–45).

The theory of practice makes possible such an approach of family/home modes which grows out from the historical experiences and cultural environment of media users. Habitus are thus mediating mechanisms: family communication adapts image recording techniques for the expression of intentions and narratives already present in culture (Bourdieu names this the solemnising and immortalising of family life; 1990, 19–20). "Habitus, like medium specificity itself, is a mediating discourse that generates and validates practice as proper to the goals defining it" (Moran 2002, 55). Moran equals the family community with the class; accordingly, within the field of home/family communication practices, the family possesses its own habitus, which is appropriated during childhood with the mediation of the practices and attitudes of the adults. In Bourdieu's view, the practices of all the agents of the same class are similar in their style (and therefore, as a result of this similarity, any individual practice can be regarded as the metaphor of any other).

The practice of home filmmaking is also structured by individual motivations, while, at the same time, the family community filters and integrates, in accordance with its own value preferences, the history of the conventions of home filmmaking, thus they subordinate their practices to functions which belong to other family communities as well, regardless of

environment and class (Moran 2002, 56). Filmmaking is not merely a technological means used in a private context in communicative situations by the members of a 'speech community' (Hymes 1967); instead, this practice must be rethought as a mutual effect of technological, social, and cultural determinations, as a "liminal space in which practitioners may explore and negotiate the competing demands of their public, communal and private, personal identities" (Moran 2002, 60). Therefore, if one understands the practice of home filmmaking as a habitus, then the question "what and how is worth presenting in a home movie?" must be given multiple solutions: the dominant ideologies influencing the practice of home filmmaking, the changing family institutions[12] and lifeworlds, and the history of the conventions, technologies of amateur recording must be analysed together. James Moran lends an entire chapter for theorising the latter, in which he treats family filmmaking as a separate habitus within amateur filmmaking. This time he describes the habitus (and not the filmmaking method) by its cultural functions: representation of daily life, place of creation of public, community and individual identities, manifestation of the continuity of generations, which outlines the home as an affective and cognitive space, and yields a narrative framework for family and personal histories (2002, 59–63).

This description of the habitus of home movies, the refinement of previous approaches occurred at the beginning of the 2000s, with the emerging use of video technology. However, the literature of the new media age written in the subsequent years reported on the turning point-like changes of the habitus of amateur films. In this new media culture or convergence culture, we may no longer speak of consumers but of producer-consumers (prosumer culture), and the limits of private and public spheres get blurred.[13] In Lev Manovich's formulation: mass consumption was replaced by mass cultural production (2009, 319). The definition and differentiation of professional and amateur media products becomes once again problematic: Jenkins thinks that it wasn't only the multimedia-surfaces of contents produced for commercial purposes

12 James Moran questions the functionalist paradigm because it emphasises family stability, consensus and continuity, but cannot properly account for "the contemporary era of families we choose, each based on a constantly shifting set of biological, social, and discursive relations structured by a habitus seeking the common denominators shared by all members" (Moran 2002, 56).

13 Media anthropologist Danah Boyd, for instance, differentiates between various levels and degrees of the private and the public in her research (see: *http://www.danah.org/,* and mainly the study *Making Sense of Privacy and Publicity*, *http://www.danah.org/ papers/talks/2010/ SXSW2010. html*). Moreover, Lawrence Lessig speaks about the modification of the architecture of the private sphere, with shifting limits of observability and researchability (Lessig 1998).

that multiplied, but also "our lives, relationships, memories, fantasies, desires also flow across media channels. Being a lover, a mummy or a teacher occurs on multiple platforms. Sometimes we tuck our kids into bed at night and other times we Instant Message them from the other side of the globe" (Jenkins 2006, 17). This is not only to say that the channels and surfaces get multiplied, and this creates a new culture, but it is also convergence when people take media into their own hands (Jenkins 2006, 17). In this approach, convergence is not only a feature of digital culture, it has not started nowadays, yet it has become dominant now. As a result of the explosive dissemination of participative culture, we have turned from media to social media (Manovich 2009, 319). Consequently, everyday life is filled up with media in such a way that the strategic thinking defining institutions and power structures is changed for tactical thinking characteristic for the everyday life of individuals. Paraphrasing de Certeau: the practice of everyday life was replaced by the practice of everyday media life (Manovich 2009).

Several attempts have been made to grasp the passage to the age of social media by the description of the functions of the new media. According to this, the function of mediated personal memory objects (also) changes in the new culture: the primacy of memory preservation and storage is taken over by the function of making contacts and identity construction,[14] the practice of preservation and memory alternates and competes with the immediate sharing of experiences, as a performative mode. The new media literature paraphrases the McLuhanian thesis of "the media is the message" in the following way: "the I is the message" (McConnell–Huba 2006). McLuhan's sentence referred to the fact that mass media are not primarily efficient by their content but their primary message is the medium itself, the change that their appearance causes partly in interpersonal relations and partly in the relation human–reality. In relation to the new age, attention is drawn to the fact that the authority of media has changed, and "the basic truth sounds somewhat different today. Something like this: 'You are the message!' Since You, as a 'recei-mitter,' [receiver-transmitter] You edit your own show, weaving in Your own attitudes, by Your taste" (Sas 2008, online version).

The discourses dividing the "old" and the "new" media age resulted in a binary logic, and caused the production of dichotomies similar to the above oppositions. The more recent literature warns that there is a need to tone down this binary logic and criticise it based on empirical data, since the delimitation of the boundaries of old and new media has brought about distortions and slips

14 In her book *Mediated Memories in the Digital Age* (2007), José van Dijck analyses this transition, the shift of communication functions, starting from the example of three old media: the diary, the home photo, and the home film.

in the right proportions. The media of the young generation, the activist and political contents were paid more attention since they were perceived as relevant examples of the "new media," whereas these practices are nothing more typical than others (Manovich 2009, 321). Patricia G. Lange examined two dichotomies from the point of view of the habitus of young video producers: amateur vs. professional, and memory record, turning to the past vs. communication, presentism (Lange 2011, 25). By the analysis of a collection of videos, the author points out that the producers and consumers of the shots use these analytical categories in a flexible way: the video, originally shot with the purpose of communication, may later become a means of retrospection (Lange 2011, 42). She proposes a research perspective also appropriate for tackling the connections of experiential and nostalgic video use: which aspects of community life become objects of mediated nostalgia; why do people turn to mediated forms of the processing of the past (by making or watching videos) in the age of ubiquitous private videos (Lange 2011, 42)?

In this theoretical context, the research of home movies offers the possibility of investigating present-day media usage, the mutual influences of media and society, and at the same time it also offers a historical perspective which turns towards home movies in a search for the sources of this participative culture. This is so because amateur filmmaking, taken into account ever since the beginnings of cinema, can be regarded as a kind of participative culture, whose dominant form up to the recent past had been family filmmaking. To put it differently: the institution or community of the family has adopted these films, ensuring their long social life, that is, it produced the habitus of home movie making. Consequently, the term home movie is used less and less often as a synonym of amateur filmmaking in new media culture, as it is increasingly replaced by the term user-generated content. It is as if the concept of home movie is no longer sufficient to be used as a metaphor of amateur productions: the institution of the family has changed, films have left the social space of the home, technologies have changed, and the ways of usage have multiplied as well.

In contemporary "media landscape" (Moran 2002), the home movie is just one of the amateur filmmaking habitus, neither more typical, nor more representative than any other practices. Starting from this new system of relations must we then understand the habitus supported by family communities. This is not to say that one practice replaces the other, but it is not a case of simultaneity either. Then again, it is not the end products of home filmmaking that become public, since these products are made for the publicity of video sharing sites. (Returning to Bourdieu's words quoted above: family filmmaking has no self-identity, any individual practice can be regarded as a metaphor of another one, which can be understood following the principle of

historicity.) The technological, social, and cultural dimensions of the previous ritualised practice must be rethought. How have the content, status, and functions of the home movies regarded as places of memory changed in the age of presentist do-it-yourself media products?

Compared to the video practices of young generations preferred by new media research, home movies offer a field of research where one may even study questions of media history, since the habitus of home movies has a documented, theorised history, while, at the same time, the change can also be sensed in the practice of contemporary movie making families: they grew up on "old media," in contrast with the young generation socialised on new media. Paraphrasing James Moran, the habitus of the home movie is a discourse which also mediates the social representation of permanently changing media. From this point of view, home movies become the historical sources of social media, of participative culture. This source type then allows the analysis of everyday life experienced within community frameworks, as it increasingly becomes an object of mediation, while at the same time, it also yields the opportunity to research the dissemination of moving images.

References

Bán, András. 2000. Dorka úszik. A privát fotó keresése [Dorka Swims. Searching for the Private Photo]. *Ex Symposion* no. 32–33: 23–27.

Belting, Hans. 2005. Image, Medium, Body. A New Approach to Iconology. *Critical Inquiry* vol. 31 (no. 2): 302–319.

Bourdieu, P. and Loic J. D. Wacquant, Loic J. D. 1989. Toward a Reflexive Sociology. Workshop with P. Bourdieu. *Sociological Theory* vol. 7 (no. 1): 26–63.

Bourdieu, Pierre. 1990. The Cult of Unity and Cultivated Differences. In *Photography: A Middle-brow Art*, 13–72. Cambridge: Polity Press.

Boyd, Danah. 2010. *Making Sense of Privacy and Publicity.* Keynote lecture presented at *SXSW.* Austin, Texas, March 13. Online version: *http://www. danah. org/papers/talks/ 2010/SXSW2010.html*

Chalfen, Richard and Ruby, Jay. 1974. The Teaching of Visual Anthropology at Temple. *The Society for the Anthropology of Visual Communication Newsletter.* 5 (3): 5–7.

Chalfen, Richard. 1987. *Snapshot Versions of Life.* Bowling Green: Bowling Green State University Popular Press.

Chalfen, Richard. 2002. Snapshots "r" Us: the Evidentiary Problematic of Home Media. *Visual Studies* vol. 17 (no. 2): 141–149. Online: *http://www.yidff.jp/ docbox/ 7/box7-1-e.html*

Hymes, Dell. 1967. The Anthropology of Communication. In *Human Communication Theory*, ed. Frank Dance, 1–39. New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston.

Jenkins, Henry. 2006. *Convergence Culture: Where Old and New Media Collide.* New York, London: New York University Press.

Lange, Patricia G. 2011. Video mediated nostalgia and the aesthetics of technical competencies. *Visual Communication* vol. 10 no. (1): 25–44.

Lessig, Lawrence. 1999. The Architecture of Privacy. *Vanderbilt Entertainment Law and Practice* vol. 1: 56–65.

Manovich, Lev. 2009. The Practice of Everyday (Media) Life. *Critical Inquiry* vol. 35 no. (2): 319–331.

McConnell, B.– and Huba, J. 2006. *Citizen Marketers. When People Are the Message*. Chicago: Kaplan Business.

Mead, Margaret. 1975. Visual Anthropology in a Discipline of Words. In *The Principles of Visual Anthropology,* ed. Paul Hockings, 3–10. New York: Mouton de Gruyer.

Mirzoeff, Nicholas. 1999. *An Introduction to Visual Culture*. London: New York: Routledge.

Mitchell, W.J. T. 1994. *Picture Theory. Essays on Verbal and Visual Representation.* Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Moran, James. 2002. *There's No Place Like Home Video.* Place: University of Minnesota Press.

Musello, Christopher. 1984. A családi fényképek és a vizuális kommunikáció vizsgálata [An Exploration of Family Photography and Visual Communication]. In *Vizuális antropológiai kutatás. Munkafüzetek* 2. [Visual Anthropological Research 2.], eds. András Bán and Forgács Péter Forgács, 27–69. Budapest: Művelődéskutató Intézet.

Odin, Roger. 2008. Reflections on the Family Home Movie as a Document: a Semio-Pragmatic Approach. In *Mining the Home Movie. Excavations in Histories and Memories,* eds. Karen L. Ishizuka and Patricia R. Zimmermann, 255–271. Los Angeles, Berkeley: University of California Press.

Odin, Roger. 2010. El cine doméstico en la institucion familiar. In *La casa abierta. El cine doméstico y sus reciclajes contemporáneos,* ed. Efrén Cuevas Álvarez, 39–60. Madrid: Ocho y Medio.

Renov, Michael. 2004. *The Subject of Documentary*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.

Ruby, Jay. 1989. The Teaching of Visual Anthropology (1). In *The Teaching of Visual Anthropology*, ed. Paulo Chiozzi, 9–18. Firenze: Editrice Il Sedicensimo.

Ruby, Jay. 1996. Visual Anthropology. In *Encyclopedia of Cultural Anthropology* vol. 4, eds. David Levinson and Melvin Ember, 1345–1351. New York: Henry Holt and Company.

Ruby, Jay. 2001. *The Professionalization of Visual Anthropology in the United States – The 1960s and 1970s.* [To be published in the selected proceedings of Origins of Visual Anthropology: Putting the Past Together Conference, June, 20–25 June, 2001, in Göttingen, Germany.] Online version: *http://astro.temple.edu/ ~ruby/ruby/iwf.html*

Sas, István. 2008. A „visszabeszélőgép", avagy az üzenet Te vagy! [The Machine that Speaks back, or the Message is You!] *Médiakutató* vol. 9 no. (3): 29–34. Online version: *http://www.mediakutato.hu/cikk/2008_03_osz/02_visszabeszelogep_uzenet /01.html*

van DIJCK, José. 2007. *Mediated Memories in the Digital Age* (Cultural Memory in the Present Series). Stanford: Stanford University Press.

Worth, Sol. 1980. Margaret Mead and the shift from 'visual anthropology' to the 'anthropology of visual communication.' *Studies in Visual Communication* vol. 6 no. (1): 15–22.

Zimmermann, Patricia R. 1995. Reel Families. A Social History of Amateur Film. Bloomington, and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press.

ACTA UNIV. SAPIENTIAE, FILM AND MEDIA STUDIES, 5 (2012) 35–54

Narrative Metalepsis as Diegetic Concept in Christopher Nolan's *Inception* (2010)

Miklós Kiss

University of Groningen (the Netherlands)
E-mail: m.kiss@rug.nl

Abstract. The paper aims to revitalise Gérard Genette's literary term of 'metalepsis' within a cinematic context,[1] emphasising the expression's creative potentials for both analytical and creative approaches. Through its 'mainstream complexity,' Christopher Nolan's 2010 film *Inception* provides a novel and, at best, progressive contribution to contemporary Hollywood cinema, exemplified in its playful take on the diversified possibilities that the metaleptic logic allows. Nolan hereby (and similarly to *Memento* and *The Prestige*) follows his *auteur* affinity of converting, moreover, converging narrative and cognitive values into and within a fictional story. By introducing a fantastic, but at least conceivably possible futuristic world of permeable dreams in *Inception*, Nolan 'diegetises' the narrative feature of the embedded structures' metaleptic transgressions, and inversely, by thoughtfully considering its viewer's abilities of comprehension, 'narrativises' human cognitive skills into storytelling forms.

Analytical and Creative Powers of Metalepsis

Gérard Genette's analytical investigation of modern multi-layered literary discourses (from Proust to Robbe-Grillet, from Sterne to Genet) required addressing new narrative strategies and their altered reading experiences. The exploration concluded in coining the narrative term of 'metalepsis,' introduced and defined by Genette as "any intrusion by the extradiegetic narrator or narratee into the diegetic universe (or by diegetic characters into a metadiegetic universe, etc.), or the inverse (as in Cortazar)" (1980, 234–235). Genette's permissive idea of

1 "Although research articles analyzing specific metaleptic instances that we see in films are not as numerous as the ones referring to literature, we can say that in the last decade the term 'metalepsis' has been widely used by film criticism, albeit mainly with a somewhat simplified meaning referring to a structure of 'world within a world' and any kind of jump between diegetic and non-diegetic worlds" (Pethő 2010, 72). The present paper's aim of 'revitalisation' refers to this reasonable criticism in order to introduce an unconventional treatment of cinematic metalepsis.

narrative corruption between the discursive level of 'telling' and the diegetic level of 'told,' opened up unforeseen possibilities for analytical (I) as well as creative (II) approaches dealing with the unveiled logic of metalepsis.

(I) Looking at the impact on the analytical field, there are, at least, two types of approaches to metalepses originated in Genette's theory. Marie-Laure Ryan introduces the options of violating distinct narrative levels between unintended, covertly 'unnatural' level-contaminations, that are 'rhetorical metalepses,' and deliberate, overtly playful transgressions that are 'ontological metalepses' (2006, 247). "The one based primarily in the (rhetorical) effects produced by representation through discourse or other semiotic means, the other in the problems of logical paradox encountered by modern science" (Pier 2011, 3).

Rhetorical metalepses most of the time do not aim at breaking the mimetic immersion of their readers; they are, according to William Nelles, "unmarked" (1992, 93) or by Genette, "ordinary and innocent" (1980, 235). For example, even the Danish Unnatural Narratologists, who otherwise convincingly point out creative discrepancies in narrational logic, would never claim that rhetorical metalepses deliberately violate the boundaries of realism (Alber et al. 2010). Unnatural transgressions in novels like *Moby Dick* or *Don Quixote* are not driven by any need for reflective or other counter-immersive strategies. Mostly, the necessity of information distribution is the only reason behind their unintended, 'innocent' metalepses, which appear as omniscient diegetic narrators and other seemingly transgressive paradoxes.[2] Still, sometimes hidden rhetorical transgressions may deliberately exploit one's immersion, that is, the reader's lack of awareness in recognising unnatural modes of information transfers. These subtle examples are able to establish, for example, unreliable but at least ambiguous textual strategies.[3]

Alternatively, ontological metalepses are "marked" (Nelles 1992, 93), "'genuine' type[s] of metalepses" (Wolf 2005, 89), which openly foreground their stories' fantastic or metafictional quality. By laying bare their fictionality, ontological metalepses overtly establish fictional transgressions between diegetic and hypodiegetic levels. Original examples are Cortázar's protagonist, who is apparently threatened by a character *from* a book he is reading (*Continuity of Parks*),[4] or Marc Forster's 2006 film, in which Harold Crick (Will Ferrell) becomes

2 See Henrik Skov Nielsen's (2004) meticulous analysis about Melville's *Moby Dick*, and Brian D. Patrick's (2008) clarification in relation to Cervantes's *Don Quixote*.

3 About the possibility of this subtle text-strategy, see Maria Mäkelä on "Suspect Tellers and the Textuality of Fictional Minds" (forthcoming).

4 Genette goes as far as claiming: "Cortazar tells the story of a man assassinated by one of the characters in the novel he is reading" (1980, 234). The metaleptic loop, however textually strongly suggested, and therefore taken for granted by Genette, is actually never fully confirmed by the short story of Cortázar (de facto nobody is

aware of the fact that he is a fictional character *in* a still developing book of an author, whom he even shares the narrative level with (*Stranger Than Fiction*).

(II) If we look at the possible influences of Genette's term on creative approaches, one may initiate a third basic category beyond rhetorical and ontological, which I will call 'illusory metalepsis' for the moment. This exceeds the distinction that Genette, after revising his initial ideas, made between 'figural' and 'fictional' metalepsis (2004, 16–18), which more or less corresponds to Ryan's division of rhetoric and ontological, introduced earlier. Illusory metalepsis neither questions immersion, nor plays metanarrative games primarily. Its metalepsis emerges not from the transgressed intrusions between the levels of 'telling' and 'told,' but from the interferences among different levels of the 'told.' Comparable to the narrative strategy that appears in Lewis Carroll's *Through the Looking Glass*, it cuts across fictionally embedded worlds, while staying on the same narrative level. Therefore illusory metalepsis is not a narrative but a diegetic concept. The overtly presented transgression neither runs into rhetorical discrepancies, nor raises ontological-existential questions within the story, as its intrusions are part of the established and accepted rules of the diegetic world.

Fictionalisation of the Metaleptic Logic: from Illusory to Ontological Consequences

Christopher Nolan, in his 2010 movie *Inception*, plays with the inherent, diversified potential of metaleptic logic. Nolan fictionalises the inherently narrative feature,[5] when establishing a futuristic world with possibilities of transgressing layers of embedded dreams. This strategy, seemingly, does not offer a clear case of metaleptic violation, but gives a case for its illusory kind. It provides an example for the dispersion of narrative logic, what the notion of metalepsis allows, into the diegetic fantasy of the film. Nolan, through his fiction, 'diegetises' the narrative idea of permeable embedded narrative levels, shaping them like nesting layers of a Russian doll. The fiction, building up an embedded dream-reality, follows the spatial metaphor common to our language:

assassinated in the novel). Against the otherwise plausible metaleptic reading, one could claim that the overlapping similarities between the diegetic and hypodiegetic worlds are only part of a strong coincidence, thus the claimed metalepsis is only a product of a rationalising inference of the reader.

5 Note that in most cases this relation is reversed, that is, narrative as well as stylistic solutions usually serve the needs of diegetic action. Another example of 'narrative fictionalisation' is (still staying 'in' Hollywood) Mennan Yapo's 2007 film *Premonition*, in which non-linear chronology, as an inherently narrative device, becomes part of the fictional world through a character (Linda, played by Sandra Bullock), who experiences and lives diegetic time out of order.

the deeper you dream, the deeper you descend into an embedded structure of dreams within dreams within dreams, and so on. [Fig. 1.]

Based on this initially narrative idea, Nolan's fiction, similarly to Montgomery Tully's *The Electronic Monster* (1960),[6] Joseph Ruben's *Dreamscape* (1984),[7] or Tarsem Singh's *The Cell* (2000), introduces a possible future, where scientific methods allow enter and influence over someone's dreams.[8] In this world, a team of 'dream experts' receives an assignment to invade a powerful tycoon's (Robert Fischer, played by Cillian Murphy) subconscious mind during his vulnerable dream state and plant an idea against the magnate's will, commissioned by Fischer's business rival, Mr. Saito (Ken Watanabe). Since the sneaky method of 'inception' is a known trick (at least in Nolan's fictional world), to avoid any suspicion about the origin of the planted idea, the team decides to create a less suspicious embedded dream-narrative, within which they can descend into the dream (hypodiegetic level 2) of the tycoon's dream (hypo 1).[9] Dramatic complications and unexpected obstacles force the team to extend the number of embedded dream-layers even further, that is, even deeper (hypo 3 and 4).[10] As Dom Cobb (Leonardo DiCaprio), the leader of the 'dream experts,' says: "Downwards is the only way forwards." [See Fig. 2.]

As I previously emphasised, this strategy, in the first instance, does not offer a clear example of metalepsis, since the transgression is neither ontological, nor rhetorical, but it is in actuality fictitious and illusory. The metaleptic contamination happens not between narrative levels, but among the fantastic fiction's diegetic and hypodiegetic layers. The idea of 'entering' somebody's dream may sound weird, but from a fantastic story's narrative point of view it does not necessarily evoke a feeling that Genette called "un effect de bizarrerie" (1972, 244).[11] Additionally, one may even realise that it does not even interfere

6 The rightly forgotten *The Electronic Monster*, aka *The Dream Machine*, is probably the first film that deals with the idea of entering and influencing someone's dreams by 'scientific' methods (by the psycho-neurologist Philip Maxwell and his device).

7 Ruben's film is closely tied to the lesser-known novel *The Dream Master* (1966), written by Robert Zelazny. In 1981, Zelazny reworked his idea for cinematic adaptation, the outline of which was purchased by 20th Century Fox and, in 1984, used as a base for the movie *Dreamscape* (Kovacs, 2009).

8 While Zelazny's scientific method for entering someone's dreams was a 'neuroparticipant therapy,' Nolan 'invents' a briefcase-size machine called a 'Portable Automated Somnacin IntraVenous (PASIV) Device' (Nolan 2010).

9 The analytical distinction between embedded narrative levels comes from Genette (1980 [1972]), however, the term 'hypodiegetic' was coined by Mieke Bal (1977, 24, 59–85) (replacing Genette's confusingly loaded term of 'metadiegetic').

10 Instead of naming the embedded levels *hypodiegetic*, *hypo-hypodiegetic*, *hypo-hypo-hypo-diegetic*, etc., I number them according to their position: the higher the number, the deeper they are in the embedded dream-structure.

11 I.e. "an effect of strangeness" (1980, 235).

with our extradiegetic reality either, bending the fantastic into the futuristic.[12] It is important to keep in mind that, within this fantastic-futuristic world, the 'real' flesh and blood bodies of the characters actually do nothing else but sleep during the flight between Sydney and Los Angeles (and therefore the majority of the duration of the film). Even though Cobb and his crew, together with Fischer, run through the film's action-packed 'inverse heist' whilst going deeper and deeper into each other's dreams, their tranquilised 'real' characters do not cease to exist on the airplane. Following the logic of the film's created fantasy-world, the protagonists' physical bodily presence exists only on this upper, diegetic level of the embedded structure, while their dream-state mind alone participates in the chain of actions in the deeper and deeper embedded hypodiegetic layers.[13] Nolan, guided by a rather precise cognitive hunch, reflects upon the difference between his characters' physiological bodies and their mentally experiencing minds. Mal (Marion Cotillard), Cobb's deceased wife, aptly sums up this difference: "Pain is in the mind."

Fortunately, the case is not as simple as can be concluded from the above. While in Inception the fictionally (thus neither narratively, nor ontologically) embedded dream-structure only imitates the metaleptic logic, an additional diegetic law is introduced, which necessarily qualifies the film as a 'proper' metaleptic narrative. Both Nolan's, as well as, for example, Ruben's film raise the dramatic stakes of the dream-invading idea by creating a rule, which establishes a bi-directional physical and thus body-related contamination among the embedded dream-layers. This simply means that, as much as diegetic actions have consequences on the hypodiegetic levels of dreams, dreams also have consequences on the frame story of the diegetic reality.[14] In this way, the attempt of planting an idea into someone's mind is not an endeavour free from any danger: beyond the reasonable, moreover, known real-life experience, in which the dreamer's physical context influences the dreams

12 See Astra Bryant's (2010) review on the Neuroblog of the Stanford University Neuroscience Program, in which, while gathering neuroscientific evidence, she ponders upon the real-life plausibility of manipulating someone's dreams (*http://www. stanford.edu/group/neurostudents/cgi-bin/wordpress/?p=649* – last accessed: 4.06. 2012).

13 Note the film's clever adjustment to the spatial nature of our metaphorical language: while the embedded dreams are descending deeper and deeper *down*, the *upper* layer of diegetic 'reality' is positioned around 10.000 meters *high* on a 747 passenger jet fly.

14 Other examples that use this 'necessary' rule are the earlier mentioned *The Cell* and the horror series *A Nightmare on Elm Street* (1984–2010), raising the stake of the deadly dream-encounters with Freddy Krueger (Robert Englund, Jackie Earle Haley).

'downwards,' these films introduce a peculiar law that makes the actions of the embedded hypodiegetic dreams consequential to 'upper' diegetic levels, too.[15]

What does this mean? While in *Dreamscape* the American president's 'real' life is endangered during or, more precisely, 'within' his nightmares, in *Inception*, dropping dead within a dream also has serious consequences for the dreamer. Someone who dies within a dream, loses reality and becomes trapped forever in a deep, unconscious mental state called 'Limbo.' Being jammed in this ultimate deep level of "unstructured dream space" (Tullmann 2012, 84), on the one hand, does not directly cause physiological extinction on the uppermost level, but, on the other hand, for the person who infinitely experiences its endless hospitality, after a while, it appears to *be* reality. "The dreamer completely loses track of what is real" (Tullmann 2012, 84), or, as Cobb bitterly explains his wife's, Mal's loss: that's how "Limbo became her [Mal's] reality."

All things considered, Nolan's illusory metalepsis of embedded dreams is extended by a fictitious law with ontological consequences. The diegetic rule of a bi-directional physical contamination among the embedded dream-levels makes *Inception* an exceptional case of ontological metalepsis, in which the viewer's immersion is not disturbed by the "fantastic" narrative device (Genette 1980, 235).

Interpretations that try to ease the unresolved ambiguity of the film's ending, latch onto this train of thought. Their offering is clear: due to the diegetic world's, as well as the film's "problem of underdetermination of information" (Southworth 2012, 35), meaning that neither Cobb, nor the viewer can be sure about what is 'real' and what is dream, the best thing we can do is to follow Cobb's resignation and not fight against but, instead, accept ambiguity. Read Nolan's words from an interview by Jeff Jensen (2010) about the very end of his film: "There can't be anything in the film that tells you one way or another because then the ambiguity at the end of the film would just be a mistake. […] I put that cut there at the end, imposing an ambiguity from outside the film. […] The real point of the scene – and this is what I tell people – is that Cobb isn't looking at the top. He's looking at his kids. He's left behind. That's the emotional significance of the thing" [emphasis added].

The unresolved ambiguity allows the emotionally unsettling, but narratively possible theory of "The 'Full Dream' Interpretation," in which Cobb, returning to his children in the 'real world,' is actually still dreaming (Tallman 2012, 1920).

15 According to William Nelles' terminology, the transgressive movement directed from the embedding 'inward' to the embedded, is called 'intrametalepsis,' while the one which points from the embedded 'outward' to the embedding, is an 'extrametalepsis' (1992, 93).

The recognition and approval of this option of relativity, on the one hand, justifies the use of inverted commas around the words 'real' and 'reality.' With this in mind, it may validate Pier's stricter definition of metalepsis as "short-circuiting of levels" (2005, 303), too, shown by the film's metaleptic short-circuit appearing as an ambiguous diegetic loop, in which the Limbo may become reality, and reality may become Limbo. Nolan visualises this logic in the form of evocating the famous Penrose steps (1958) and Escher's lithograph called *Ascending and Descending* (1959/1960),[16] which clearly and even literally refers to that bi-directional logic among the embedded narrative levels; what the film employs as a diegetic rule, and on which I elaborated earlier[17]. [Figs. 3–7.]

The acceptance of ambiguity, that is "The 'Full Dream' Interpretation," suggests an infinitely, or at least indefinitely extended embedded structure, in which Cobb and Mal, after spending fifty years in an artificially created Limbo, wake up not in reality, but only one level up in their multilayered dream. [Fig. 8.] See Cobb's own words about the possibility of losing track of reality while spending too much time in Limbo: "We [Cobb and Mal] were exploring the concept of dream within a dream. I kept pushing things. I wanted to go deeper and deeper. I wanted to go further. I just didn't understand the concept that hours could turn into years down there, that we could get trapped so deep, that when we wound up on the shore of our own subconscious, we lost sight of what was real."

Finally, the uncertainty of deictic hierarchy, that is, the ambiguity of the film's diegetic reality, may plant unsettling emotions in the viewer. Nolan extends ambiguity beyond his film's story, moreover, as the above citation confirms, 'expects' his 'incepted' doubt to live further "from outside the film." The more Cobb surrenders himself to his own suspicion, the more the viewer becomes doubtful about the status of reality and about the solution of the film's happy ending. This idea preys upon the sense that the metaleptic playfulness may transgress not only the story's embedded levels, but the film's diegetic

16 Lionel and Robert Penrose's article in the *British Journal of Psychology* (1958) on the impossible staircase, influenced the Dutch graphic artist Maurits Cornelis Escher's lithograph (*Ascending and Descending*, 1959/1960). Escher, being always interested in the relation between ambiguity and geometry, tried "to capture infinity in a 'closed' composition" (Schattschneider 2005, 241) since, at least, from the 1930s. Figure 3. juxtaposes Escher's 1953 lithograph *Relativity* with the poster of *Inception*, and a detail of his 1959/1960 *Ascending and Descending* with the Penroses' original 1958 drawing and the film's Penrose stairs.

17 Monika Fludernik (2003) examines the narrator's ascending and descending transgressions between embedded narrative levels in detail, as she revisits and renames the Genettean subcategories of metalepsis.

frame too, triggering an outward, extradiegetic emotion that unravels baffling feelings in the viewer. This feeling, whether it is triggered by introducing a theme like the awakening story of Truman Burbank, who unknowingly participates in a television reality program in Peter Weir's *The Truman Show* (1998), or by questioning reality's reference point through infinitely expandable embedded levels in *Inception*, becomes extradiegetic, existential and, ultimately, viscerally real. The psychologically identified potential,[18] in which the confrontation with ontological metalepsis turns into an ultimate existential doubt, was originally recognised by Genette (1980, 236), who cites Jorge Luis Borges for an authorisation of the idea: "Such inversions suggest that if the characters in a story can be readers or spectators, then we, their readers or spectators, can be fictitious" (1964, 46). Inviting the viewer by tickling his or her existential emotions, the personal game between Cobb ("I know what's real.") and Mal ("No creeping doubts?") becomes vital as it extends to an extradiegetic level. Regardless of the hypothetical likelihood of emerging extradiegetic emotions, one should be rational and remind the critic, that Nolan's film does not go as far as Cortázar or Weir. Although *Inception* also plays with the opportunity of planting existential doubt in its viewer, as a complex but primarily mainstream film, it does not directly thematise the notion. Keeping most of the ambiguity within the story, Nolan does not really sacrifice his film's immersion for establishing some metanarrative anxiety.

On the other hand, accepting the unresolvable ambiguity may, following Nolan's above advice, justify an emotional experience or, in bearing with my following points, trigger an interest in the mode of storytelling. Ambiguity actually tolerates a balance between these options of 'fiction emotions,' which take as their object a "fictional character or story events," and 'artefact emotions,' which have "fascination with the construction of a film narrative or production design" (Plantinga 2009, 89).[19] Contemporary viewers, as 'nerdy,'[20] "amateur narratologists" (Mittell 2006, 38), more often give up on the story and appreciate the film's inviting and arresting narrative strategies, here conveyed by the fictionalisation of the metaleptic logic.

18 See the psychotic disorder tellingly called 'The Truman Syndrome' (Fusar-Poli et al. 2008).

19 For more, see Carl Plantinga's encyclopaedic explanation about 'fiction,' 'artefact,' and 'metaemotions' (2009).

20 See Xan Brooks's article, *We are all nerds now* (2003).

'Mainstream Complexity'[21]

The strategy of fictionalising narrative features might be familiar to those who have followed Nolan's filmmaking oeuvre so far. For example, in *Memento* (2000) he plays with inverse storytelling as a compositional, thus truly narrative category of structuring the plot. The movie 'diegetises' the main idea whilst motivating its inverse storytelling by introducing a character with anterograde amnesia. Another example is *The Prestige* (2006), in which Nolan toys with narrative features like unreliability, plot-twists and other complex hierarchies of frames and horizontal embeddings.[22] With the consistency of a real *auteur*, Nolan utilises the narrative potential once again when connecting unreliability with rivalling illusionists or tying plot-twists by use of 'the prestige,' which is the pay-off of a magic trick and also of the movie itself.

With his laconic statement, "nothing comes from nothing" (2006, 75), David Bordwell assigns these innovative movies and techniques, which push the limits of narrative opportunities and of their viewers' cognitive abilities, "within a tradition, one that demands a balance between innovation and adherence to norms" (2006, 103). What Nolan does is an intensification of the existing values of Classical Cinema, creating something Bordwell terms as 'hyperclassical storytelling' (2006, 61, 63), and what Warren Buckland describes further by his distinct categories of 'complex' and 'puzzle films' (2009).[23] The film *Inception* offers an excellent example of this equilibrium, which I label as 'mainstream complexity.' The expression aims to capture the ambition of balancing between seemingly incongruous values of accessibility and challenging narrative innovations. In this sense, Nolan is a typical 'post-*auteur* author' (Elsaesser 2011, 247), who maintains Hollywood's rule of thumb of 'access for all,'[24] as well as providing intriguingly complex experiences, mostly by use of storytelling creativity: by inversion, framed twists and metalepsis. Beyond these,

21 *Mainstream Complexity* was the title of a joint workshop-contribution of Annie van den Oever, Anna Backman Rogers and Miklós Kiss at the University of Groningen in the Spring of 2011. Hereby I would like to thank to my colleagues for the numerous stimulating discussions we had in relation to this notion.

22 For a proper overview on possibilities of narrative embedding, see Monika Fludernik (2009, 28–29).

23 See Bordwell on Classical Narration (1985) and on the tendency of Intensified Continuity (2002 [2006], 121–138). Buckland specifies Bordwell's definition introducing a new category of Puzzle Film: "A puzzle plot is intricate in the sense that the arrangement of events is not just complex, but complicated and perplexing; the events are not simply interwoven, but entangled" (2009, 3).

24 See Joseph D. Anderson on 'accessibility' and its evolutionary-cognitive demand behind the developing 'Hollywood style' (1998, 10–12).

his *Inception*, as well as *Memento* and *The Prestige*, maximise their appeal by embodying a balanced hybridisation of technological, economic, and cognitive aspects.[25] Let me take a brief look, one by one, at these features.

From a technological point of view, these complex and puzzle films play on the possibilities of new media platforms. Their complex narratives, as often as not, require close readings relying on technical engines such as pause,[26] rewind, and replay.[27] Some directors, such as Charlie Kaufman in the quotation below, put it rather bluntly, as they speak about calculated interplay between narrative and technical dimensions: "what I try to do is infuse my screenplays with enough information that upon repeated viewings you can have a different experience" (Johnson 2006, 164). The balanced metaleptic structure in *Inception* complicates its storytelling just as much as it offers an ambiguous but comprehensible solution to its narrative riddle, however, at the same time, it promises a clearer understanding upon repeated viewing.

Technological interest is closely related to economic demands, which are also served by Nolan's complex narratives. Joseph D. Anderson's evolutionary approach makes clear that the above-mentioned directive for 'accessibility' was (and is still) a key of 'natural selection' in the entertainment business. In order to maximize box-office grosses, one needs to equalise two distinct concepts, both theorised by the television industry. During the late sixties and the seventies, a safe principle governed the narrative schedules of prime-time television. Thinking about addressing the widest possible audience, NBC's 'Least Objectionable Programming' philosophy followed a cautious rule prioritising the formula of the 'lowest common denominator' in their viewers' tastes (Klein 1971). With the new technological platforms and opportunities, the abounding appearance of specialised, 24/7 broadcasting television channels and, last but not least, with the quick exhaustion of possibilities that the rule permitted, the faint-hearted encompassing principle of the LOP model became obsolete. Although aiming for the same economic outcome, the 'Most Repeatable Programming' model established and, more importantly, allowed new strategies. Arm-in-arm with these changes of the media landscape, "the MRP model cultivates nuance and depth; it welcomes 'tricks'" (Johnson 2006, 162), generally, it opens its governing principles beyond a one-dimensional emotional gratification. Without delving

25 This tripartite division follows Steven Johnson's (2006, 156–184) take on the ingredients of contemporary popular experience.

26 See the usefulness of pausing the image in spotting (close to) subliminal montages in, for example, movies like *Fight Club* (David Fincher, 1999) or *Memento*. The viewer's chance of detecting these hidden features is dependent on the option of freezing the image.

27 Early examples of strong reliance on repeated viewing were twist narratives like *The Usual Suspects* (Bryan Singer, 1995) or *The Sixth Sense* (M. Night Shyamalan, 1999).

any deeper into details, it is worth pointing out that the idea of implementing 'depth' and 'tricks' is the strategy which is meant to ensure stronger viewer engagement through, for example, prolonged or repeated interest in a television program or film.[28] Television's "MRP model has infiltrated Hollywood" (Johnson 2006, 163), as we see in Kaufman's or Nolan's cases. The 'multiple entry-point' strategy became influential in Postmodern Hollywood, permitting "'access' to the film emotionally and intellectually" (Elsaesser 2011, 248). Thomas Elsaesser takes on Noël Carroll's thesis of a 'two-tiered system of communication' (Carroll 1982), which, again, perfectly illuminates Nolan's narrative design that combines the traditional emotional appeal with a not less attractive intellectual puzzle of storytelling. Inspired filmmakers and their movies,[29] complemented Hollywood's emotional appeal with intriguing intellectual puzzles, manifested in non-linear, multi-layered, multiple-draft, metaleptic, and other kind of narrative complexities. The success of their innovative creativity in storytelling structures induced theoretical discussion reconsidering narrative terms and analytical concepts (as, for example, this article takes on Genette's metalepsis).

Anderson's argument is actually taken literally by Nolan, who combines economic concerns with ecological dispositions. From the late nineties, the effectiveness of the LOP and MRP models is re-evaluated through empirical, cognitive studies on the viewer. Alongside the sharpened competition among television networks and filmmaking studios, the importance of the criteria of objectivity grew in anticipating viewer reactions. While show runners and filmmakers of the classical and post-classical era functioned as "programmers who develop programs to run on a computer that they do not understand" (Anderson 1998, 12), post-*auteur* authors, who cannot afford the risk of these trial and error methods, become computer operators, who design their movie-softwares exclusively for the hardware of human perception. Closing the gap between folk and academic psychology, contemporary filmmakers consciously reflect on and, in the case of Nolan, even narrativise insights coming from cognitive studies.[30] In his films, Nolan does not only incorporate cognitive

28 About the emergence of new narrative forms of television entertainment and the phenomenon's academic as well as mainstream celebration, see Jason Mittell's seminal article (2006).

29 Some early, paradigmatic examples: *Pulp Fiction* (Quentin Tarantino, 1994), *Open Your Eyes* ([*Abre los* ojos] Alejandro Amenábar, 1997), *Lost Highway* (David Lynch, 1997), *eXistenZ* (David Cronenberg, 1999), *Memento* (Christopher Nolan, 2000), *Chasing Sleep* (Michael Walker, 2000), *Donnie Darko* (Richard Kelly, 2001), *Mulholland Drive* (David Lynch, 2001) *Adaptation* (Spike Jonze, 2002), etc.

30 On the professionalisation of filmmakers' 'reverse engineering' method, that is, on the cognitive approach to the 'filmmaker-audience loop,' see Carl Plantinga's article (2011, 45).

features (anterograde amnesia in *Memento*, awareness and attention in *The Prestige*, lucid dreams[31] in *Inception*), but, through well-architected narrative complexity, he recreates these cognitive functions through the viewing experience. Similar to the fictionalisation of narrative features, these films 'diegetise,' moreover 'narrativise' our human cognitive skills into their stories and storytelling forms.[32] The diegesis' metaleptic dream-structure, skilfully designed by Ariadne (Ellen Page), the talkatively baptised[33] dream-architect of the team, is mirrored in *Inception*'s metaleptic narrative and cognitive experience, carefully designed by Nolan.

The film's metaleptic structure contests cognitive abilities of viewers, however, this challenge stays within our accommodation ranges.[34] Much as the narrative complexity of five embedded layers is far beyond the classical narrative's tradition, it stays within the cognitive scope of our memories. The cognitive challenge is perfectly balanced through compensatory techniques of the narrative: it is introduced to the viewer by the film's setup action, it is restricted by the number of employed layers, and it is compensated by striking differences between these embedded and transgressed levels. Firstly, the film's exposition, with its triple-layer metaleptic structure, functions as a cognitive training for the viewer, preparing us for the coming, further extended, embedding complexity. This is another consequently employed principle by Nolan, as he uses similar conditioning through a technically reversed first scene in *Memento*, or in the opening line of *The Prestige*, where he addresses his viewers by a telling metanarrative wink: "Are you watching closely?" Secondly, the choice of the number of embedded layers in *Inception* is in correspondence with George A. Miller's (1956) pioneer cognitive theory about the function of our memory working, or, more precisely about our 'immediate' (Miller), 'working memory' (Baddeley 1992). Miller's study claims that one can remember 'seven plus or

31 Lucid dreams, coined by Frederik van Eeden, are dreams "in which the sleeper is aware that he/she is dreaming" (Bryant 2010).

32 In this respect, unexpectedly, Michel Gondry's playful take on cognitive features (on the border between nature and nurture in *Human Nature* [2001], on memory in *Eternal Sunshine of the Spotless Mind* [2004], and on dreams in *The Science of Sleep* [2006]) becomes comparable with Nolan's interest.

33 In Greek mythology, Ariadne helps Theseus find his way in the Minotaur's complex labyrinth.

34 A recent counter-example is Tomas Alfredson's *Tinker Tailor Soldier Spy* (2011). See Roger Ebert's (2011) perplexed criticism on the film ("I confess I was confused some of the time and lost at other times; the viewer needs to hold in mind a large number of characters, a large number of events and an infinite number of possibilities") and David Bordwell's (2012) explication on Ebert's confusion ("the film adheres to common conventions of modern storytelling but then subtracts one or two layers of redundancy").

minus two' pieces of newly acquired information simultaneously, that he or she does not hold in any form, does not connect to any other knowledge and does not tie to the stable knowledge of the long-term store (Miller calls these 'one-dimensional' types of information). Looking at the film from this perspective, establishing 5 embedded layers, Nolan challenges his viewers' memory capacity from a safe side. Finally, the distinctness between levels in the film is strongly signposted by different weather conditions (sunshine, rain, snow), diverse settings (city, interior, beach), and contrasting colour tones (see Sinopoli's infographic [Fig. 2]). *Inception* is "unconventionally conventional" (Bordwell 2012) in its intriguing tightrope walk above narrative modes of classical and puzzle (complex?), creative attitudes of generic and auteur (post-*auteur* author?), and broad values of mainstream and artistic (midcult?).

Nolan's Cinema of Narrative Attractions

Fear and pity may be aroused by spectacular means; but they may also result from the inner structure of the piece, which is the better way, and indicates a superior poet (see: Aristotle, *Poetics*, part XIV).

The year 2010, in Hollywood, was indisputably owned by two 'post-*auteur* author' 'poets.'[35] The clash between James Cameron's *Avatar* (actually premiered in December 2009) and Nolan's *Inception* (July 2010) was more than the usual box-office contest between 20th Century Fox and Warner Bros. The prominence of these films relit one of the most enduring topoi about a film-historical T-junction of two ever-competing paths between narrative and perceptual representations. According to this, Nolan's visually traditional, but narratively radical filmmaking stands against Cameron's progressive, spectacular 3D cinema. While in *Inception* the visuals are subordinated to the embedded narrative complexity, in *Avatar* the story seems to be supplementary to the visual spectacle. See Nolan's above detailed visual strategies as cues for keeping track with the narrative, against Cameron's exaggerated staging in depth, or his single-minded prop- and attribute-choice (the Na'vi's spears, bows and long tales); all in service of highlighting his spectacular 3D illusion. Anyhow, interestingly 'perpendicularity' becomes the common denominator behind the two completely different filmmaking attitudes. Nolan, opposing the current trend of the visual attractivity of 3D cinema, takes on a different dimension of perpendicular representation. Instead of playing with visual depth through optical trickery, he takes 'perpendicularity' metaphorically as he digs deep into a nested plot of embedded narrative layers.

35 In the referred article, Elsaesser exemplifies his term through Cameron (2011).

Narrative intricacy is an invitational technique of Hollywood films embracing the idea of 'mainstream complexity.' Crafty storytelling offers an indirect call allowing the viewer's capability of 'being smart.' As Jason Mittell formulates "we want to be competent enough to follow […] narrative strategies" (2006, 38), and *Inception* pleases this fundamental wish of the viewer. The well-balanced metaleptic challenge honours one's participation by guaranteeing a positive emotion: at the end of the experience, the entangled layers integrate, the plot-wrinkles are ironed out, and the viewer's effort pays off. The release of fictional and/or artificial emotions ensures our cognitive reward.

References

Alber, Jan and Stefan Iversen, Henrik Skov Nielsen, Brian Richardson. 2010. Unnatural Narratives, Unnatural Narratology Beyond Mimetic Models. *Narrative*, vol.18, no. 2: 113–136.

Anderson, Joseph D. 1998 [1996]. *The Reality of Illusion. An Ecological Approach to Cognitive Film Theory.* Carbondale, and Edwardsville: Southern Illinois UP.

Aristotle: *Poetics*. (Translated by S. H. Butcher.) *http://classics.mit.edu/Aristotle/poetics. html.* (Last accessed 4.07.2012.)

Baddeley, Alan. 1992. Working Memory. *Science*, New Series, vol. 255, no. 5044: 556–559.

Bal, Mieke. 1977. *Narratologie. Essais sur la signification narrative dans quatre romans modernes.* Paris: Klincksieck.

Bordwell, David. 1985. *Narration in the Fiction Film*. Madison: University of Wisconsin Press.

Bordwell, David. 2002. Intensified Continuity: Visual Style in Contemporary American Film. *Film Quarterly*, vol. 55, no. 3: 16–28.

Bordwell, David. 2006. *The Way Hollywood Tells It.* Berkeley, and Los Angeles: University of California Press.

Bordwell, David. 2012. Tinker Tailor: A Guide for the Perplexed. *Observations on Film Art*. no. 23 (January). [online] *http://www.davidbordwell. net/blog/2012/01/23/tinker-tailor-a-guide-for-the-perplexed/*. (Last accessed: 23.01.2012.)

Borges, Jorge Luis. 1964 [1960]. *Other Inquisitions 1937–1952*. Austin: University of Texas Press.

Brooks, Xan. 2003. We are all Nerds Now. *The Guardian*, Friday (12 December): 4, [online] *http://www.guardian.co.uk/film/2003/dec/12/lordoftherings* (last accessed: 12.01.2012).

Buckland, Warren. 2009. Introduction: Puzzle Plots. In *Puzzle Films: Complex Storytelling in Contemporary Cinema*, ed. Buckland, 1–12. Oxford: Wiley – Blackwell, 1–12.

Carroll, Noël. 1982. The Future of Allusion: Hollywood in the Seventies (and Beyond). *October*, vol. 20, (Spring): 51–81.

Ebert, Roger. 2011. Tinker Tailor Soldier Spy. *Chicago Sun-Times*, (14 December). 14, *http://rogerebert.suntimes.com/apps/pbcs.dll/article?AID=/20111214/REVIEWS/111219994*. (Last accessed: 23.01.2012.)

Elsaesser, Thomas. 2011. James Cameron's *Avatar*: access for all. *New Review of Film and Television Studies*, vol. 9, no. 3: 247–264.

Fludernik, Monika. 2003. Scene Shift, Metalepsis, and the Metaleptic Mode. *Style*, vol. 37, no. 4 (Winter): 382–400.

Fludernik, Monika. 2009. *An Introduction to Narratology*. London, and New York: Routledge.

Fusar-Poli, Paolo and Oliver Howes, Lucia Valmaggia, Philip McGuire. 2008. 'Truman Signs' and Vulnerability to Psychosis. *The British Journal of Psychiatry*. vol. 193: 167–169.

Genette, Gérard. 1972. *Figures III*. Paris: Seuil.

Genette, Gérard. 1980 [1972]. *Narrative Discourse*. Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press.

Genette, Gérard. 2004. *Métalepse. De la figure à la fiction*. Paris: Seuil.

Jensen, Jeff. 2010. Christopher Nolan on his 'last' Batman movie, an 'Inception' videogame, and that spinning top**.** *Entertainment Weekly.*, *http://insidemovies.ew.com/2010/11/30/christopher-nolan-batman-inception/* (Last accessed: 12.01.2012.)

Johnson, Steven. 2006 [2005]. *Everything Bad is Good for You*. London: Penguin Books.

Klein, Paul L. 1971. Why you watch what you watch when you watch. *TV Guide*, (24 July): 24, 6–9.

Kovacs, Christopher S. 2009. ...And Call Me Roger: The Literary Life of Roger Zelazny, Part 4, In *The Collected Stories of Roger Zelazny, Volume 4: Last Exit to Babylon*, eds. David G. Grubbs, Christopher S. Kovacs, Ann Crimmins, 523. Framingham, MA: NESFA Press.

Mäkelä, Maria. ([forthcoming in 2013].) Cycles of Narrative Necessity. Suspect Tellers and the Textuality of Fictional Minds. In *Stories and Minds. Cognitive Approaches to Literary Narrative*. Frontiers of Narrative Series, eds. Lars Bernaerts, Dirk de Geest, Luc Herman & and Bart Vervaeck. Lincoln, NE: University of Nebraska Press.

Miller, George A. 1956. The Magical Number Seven, Plus or Minus Two: Some Limits on Our Capacity for Processing Information. *The Psychological Review*, no. 63: 81–97.

Mittell, Jason. 2006. Narrative Complexity in Contemporary American Television. *The Velvet Light Trap*, no. 58: 29–40.

Nelles, William. 1992. Stories within stories: Narrative levels and embedded narrative. *Studies in the Literary Imagination*, Spring, vol. 25, no. 1 (Spring): 79–96.

Nielsen, Henrik Skov. 2004. The Impersonal Voice in First-Person Narrative Fiction. *Narrative*, vol. 12, no. 2: 133–150.

Nolan, Christopher. 2010. *Inception. The Shooting Script*. San Rafael, CA: Insight Editions.

Patrick, Brian D. 2008. Metalepsis and Paradoxical Narration in *Don Quixote*: A Reconsideration. *Letras Hispanus*, vol. 5, no.2: 116–132.

Penrose, Lionel S. and Robert Penrose. 1958. Impossible objects: A special type of visual illusion. *British Journal of Psychology*, vol. 49, no. 1: 31–33.

Pethő, Ágnes. 2010. Intermediality as Metalepsis in the "Cinécriture" of Agnès Varda. *Acta Universitatis Sapientiae. Film and Media Studies*, no. 3: 69–94.

Pier, John. 2005. Metalepsis. In. *Routledge Encyclopedia of Narrative Theory*, eds. David Herman, Manfred Jahn and Marie-Laure Ryan, 303–304. New York: Routledge.

Pier, John. 2011. Metalepsis. *The Living Handbook of Narratology. http://hup.sub.uni-hamburg.de/lhn/index.php/Metalepsis.* (Last accessed: 13.01.2012.)

Plantinga, Carl. 2009. Emotion and Affect. In *The Routledge Companion to Philosophy and Film*, eds. Paisley Livingstone and Carl Plantinga, pages. New York: Routledge.

Plantinga, Carl. 2011. Folk Psychology for Film Critics and Scholars. *Projections*, vol. 5, no. 2 (Winter): 26–50.

Ryan, Marie-Laure. 2006. *Avatars of Story*. Minneapolis: University of Minneapolis Press.

Schattschneider, Doris. 2005 [1990]. *M.C. Escher. Visions of Symmetry*. London: Thames & Hudson.

Sinopoli, Matt. 2010. An Illustrated Guide to the 5 Levels of Inception. *http://www. cinemablend.com/images/news/19643/_1280106601.jpg* (Last accessed: 13.01.2012.)

Southworth, Jason. 2012. Let Me Put My Thoughts in You: It Was All Just a Dream. In *Inception and Philosophy*, ed. David Kyle Johnson, 31–45. Hoboken, New Jersey: Wiley.

Tallman, Ruth 2012. Was It All a Dream?: Why Nolan's Answer Doesn't Matter. In *Inception and Philosophy*, ed. David Kyle Johnson, 17–30. Hoboken, New Jersey: Wiley.

Tullmann, Katherine 2012. The Parable of the Spinning Top: Skepticism, Angst, and Cobb's Choice. In *Inception and Philosophy*, ed. David Kyle Johnson, 77–91. Hoboken, New Jersey: Wiley.

Wolf, Werner 2005. Metalepsis as a Transgeneric and Transmedial Phenomenon. In *Narratology Beyond Literary Criticism,*. eds. Jan Christoph Meisler, Tom Kindt & and Wilhelm Schernus, 83–107. Berlin, New York: Walter de Gruyter.

List of Figures

Figure 1. Narrative maps of *Inception*, drawn by Nolan himself (2010).

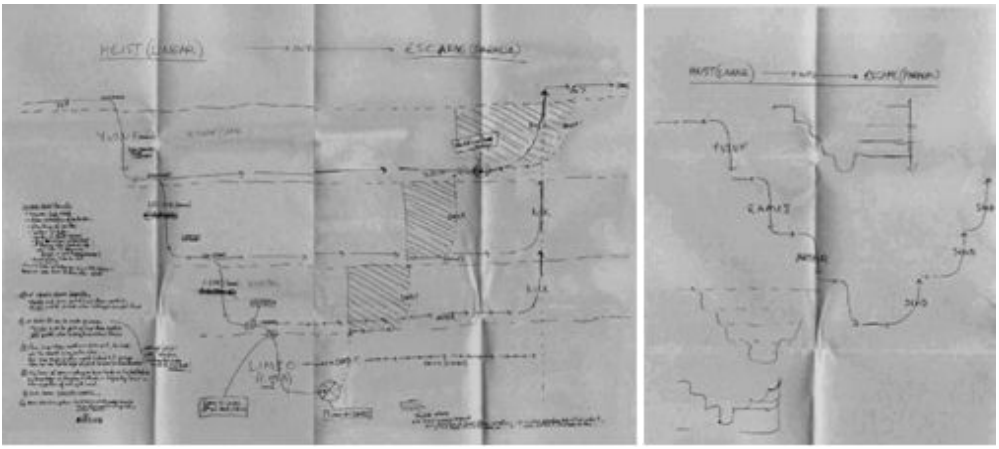
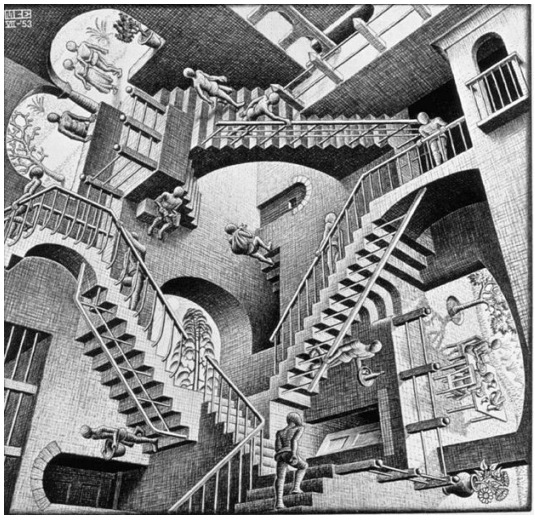
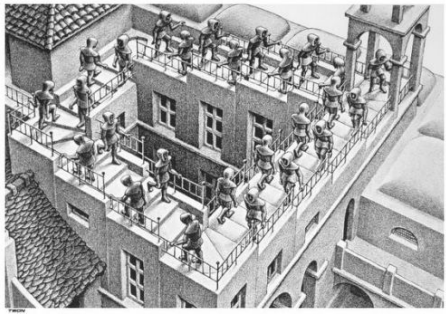


Figure 2. Matt Sinopoli's (2010) infographic visualises the layers of the movie (from diegetic to consecutively and consequently embedded hypodiegetic levels).

Figures 3–7. Loop-visualisations by Escher, Penrose & Penrose, and Nolan may cue narrative inferences.





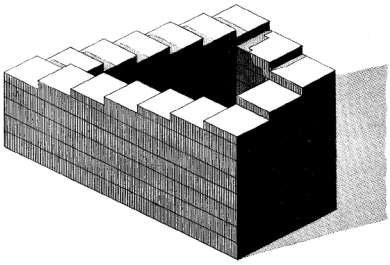
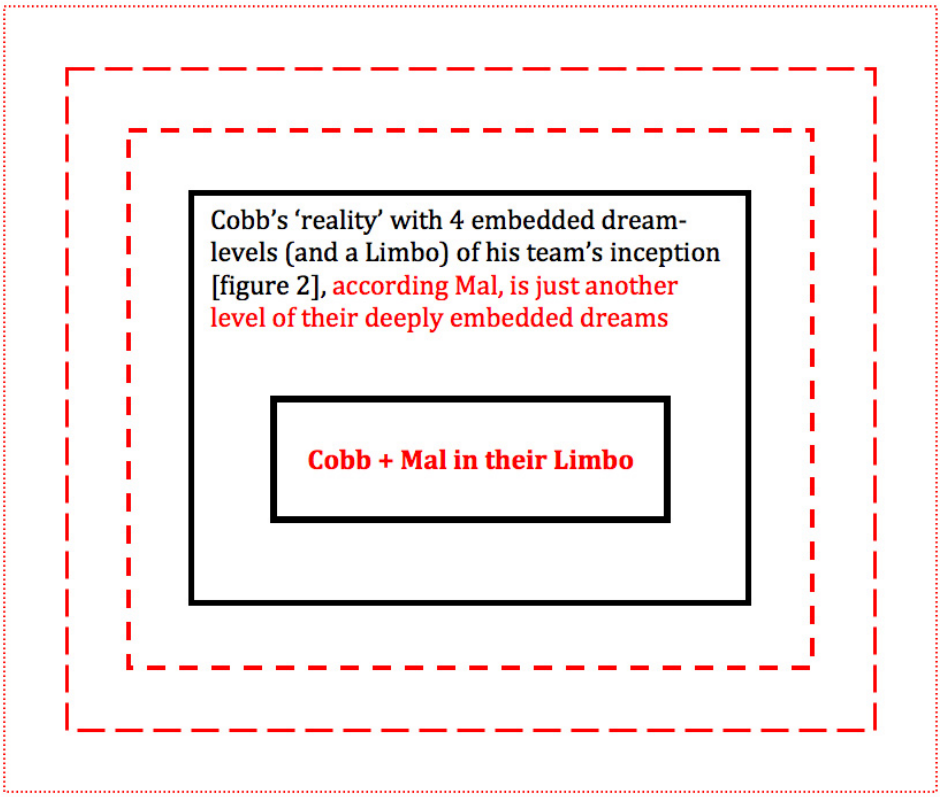


Figure 8. The narratively possible "'Full Dream' Interpretation" implies an indefinitely extended embedded structure with uncertain deictic hierarchy.



ACTA UNIV. SAPIENTIAE, FILM AND MEDIA STUDIES, 5 (2012) 55–71

World Cinema Goes to Italy. Abbas Kiarostami: *Certified Copy* (2010)

Hajnal Király
University of Lisbon
E-mail: hajnal.kiraly@gmail.com

Abstract. The issue of the relationship between the original and its copy as thematised in Kiarostami's film *Certified Copy* (2010) has been discussed in many articles so far. Instead of engaging itself in a philosophical argumentation, the present article rather proposes a close analysis of visual strategies, not only reflecting the conceptual framework outlined by the title, dialogues and narrative features, but, above all, revealing Kiarostami's first "European" film as a "copy" of some paradigmatic European films. Following Laura Mulvey's term of "gender-specific storytelling," used apropos of Rossellini's *Journey to Italy* (*Viaggio in Italia*, 1954), I will focus on the "gender-specific gaze" identifiable in both the Rossellini and the Kiarostami film. I will argue that this latter, together with an elaborated use of "frames" so typical for the Western visual culture, is responsible for a sophisticated imagery ultimately reflecting on the fragile borders between reality and its illusion, an issue of unprecedented actuality in the age of the digital and the new media.

"*I believe that cinema should be granted the possibility of remaining not understood.*"

Abbas Kiarostami[1]

Kiarostami's *Certified Copy* has been debated for a long time after its presentation at the 2010 Cannes festival. It has been labelled "ambivalent," "conceptual," "philosophical," and even a "copy" of some paradigmatic films of the European Neo-realism and modernism, as well as a remake of one of Kiarostami's earlier films, *The Report* (1977).[2] Its ambivalence primarily consisted – besides the enigmatic story – of its curious position between the "socially sensitive" Iranian New Film and a "lighter" European "art movie." In

1 See Abbas Kiarostami in conversation with Jean-Luc Nancy (2005, 88).
2 Aaron Cutler refers to Jaochim Rosenbaum, who identified the connection with The Report. Kiarostami is not denying it either in the interview (2011, 13).

Thomas Elsaesser's approach, this kind of fusion is characteristic to the so-called "world cinema:" "Formally speaking, in many cases, world cinema seems to be art cinema 'light'. Its treatment of time and space is closer to the mainstream than earlier experimental, avant-garde films or third cinema, and its narratives appropriate or cite conventional rhetorical strategies: for instance, the motif of the journey, quest or chase are almost universal" (2005, 509).[3] This is complemented by the "conceptuality" of the film, raising, once again, the issue of borders between reality and fiction (thus emphasising the role of the spectator in conferring a philosophical meaning) in a European setting. While previous movies of Kiarostami dealt with representation as a copy of reality, here the discussion is taken one level further: this time the 'comedy of the couple,'[4] revealing existential issues of the man–woman relationship is framed – in harmony with the North Italian background – by concepts of the Italian Renaissance concerning the original work of art (as copy of "nature") and its imitation.[5] The double structure of *nature – representation (original) – its copy* persists as interchangeable, an oscillation all over the film: model–painting and original–copy become equivalent relationships.[6] The central thesis, repeatedly formulated in dialogues, storyline and visuals, disqualifies the hierarchy between original and copy and emphasises the merit of this latter in guiding us to the former. With this, we are back to the familiar motto of Kiarostami's previous films: *the way to the truth goes through lies* (Elena 2005, 188).

3 He is also defining world cinema as a "reworking of third cinema, which was 'third' in relation to Hollywood as 'first' cinema, and European national/art cinema as 'second' cinema," and initially referred to politically engaged cinema, losing, with time, its political agenda to nowadays "indicate fusion and hybridity of national and international, ethnically specific and globally universal characteristics" (2005, 496). Moreover, its definition would refer to films "as part of the identity politics that has permeated both developed and developing nations," realised "across stories of journeys and discoveries, of everyday lives in harsh natural conditions or under difficult political circumstances." As he points out, world cinema also "dramatizes conflicts between tradition and modernity, hegemony and the margins, global and local, Westernization and indigenization" (Elsaesser 2005, 508–509).

4 Vs. Shirin (2008), a "tragedy of the passion" (see Youssef Ishagpour 2010, 35). Aaron Cutler defines the film as "A genre synthesis of screwball comedies of remarriage and of mid-movement Italian neorealism" (2011, 12).

5 Sándor Radnóti distinguishes between two traditional modes of imitation: that of nature and that the "authors:" the first is called original, so "imitation" or copy can be restricted to the second case (see 1999, 68).

6 As formulated in the film, "The model is the original." László Tarnay points out that for James, the male protagonist, the copy has the same function as the original. Moreover, as Kiarostami suggests, the historical aspect of this relationship is irrelevant, more important is the issue of "context," the original setting of the work of art (Tarnay, 2011).

Many interpretations of the movie are lost in defusing the story of the couple and tend to agree about the improvised, "as if" nature of the unfolding events: the woman, referred to as "She" all over the film and James are constantly improvising (an element specific to Kiarostami films),[7] either playing that they are married or that they are not (and this is their first meeting), which also explains the ambivalence effect. As László Tarnay points out, the story itself appears as a representation, a "staging" of the dilemma of the original (2011). Actually, from the point of view of the fiction–reality issue – paraphrasing the Aristotelian "what could have been" principle – or a convincing, humanistic representation of interpersonal issues, helped by a double, self-reflexive structure, it is not relevant weather we are witnessing a beginning or an artificially restarted relationship: *the protagonists are playing that they are playing*.[8]

Juliette Binoche's way of acting is especially full of mannerism, as she seems to be continuously looking into a mirror, "matching" her face to the given situation, just like the female characters of Cassavetes. Her being the only professional actor of the film, this can also be interpreted as a self-reflexive statement about acting or, more specifically, method-acting that still holds very strongly in European and American cinema. She is evidently playing herself as an actress, when, just like a chameleon, she is deliberately changing her well known "film faces," as well: the Hollywood star, the dramatic actress of European art movies and the almost unrecognisable, everyday face without makeup from Kiarostami's previous film, *Shirin*. Moreover, as it has been rightly pointed out by Aaron Cutler, in her relationship to James, played by the non-actor Shimmel, watching and following her closely, one can identify the recurrent original-copy motif of the film. This anxiety between an actor and non-actor, just like the blurred line between acting and non-acting, also produces a kind of estrangement beneficial to the film (Cutler 2011, 15), reminding us of works of neo-realist and modernist cinema.[9]

7 Laura Mulvey talks about an "uncertainty principle" in the case of films by Kiarostami (2009, 123), while Alberto Elena emphasises their "misleading" character, responsible for the distancing between films and audience (2005, 187).

8 Contrary to Jean-Luc Nancy's opinion, who, in his essay on *Life and Nothing More* (*Zendegi va digar hich*, 1991), affirms that the *mise en abyme* structure does not characterise Kiarostami's films, this can be encountered in the much earlier *Close up* (1990). But Nancy is right in affirming that in all his films "appearances intervene only to underscore the manner in which looking and the real together are mobilized" (2001, 26).

9 As Laura Mulvey points out in the case of *Journey to Italy*, Rossellini did not give any support to his star actors: "As a result, their presence on the screen is uncertain. Icons of stardom, they are also themselves, unsure where the boundary lies between

The original-copy discourse as conceptual framework is synchronised with a continuous "re-framing," both narratological and visual, also responsible for the distancing effect: besides a variation of the same scene, it can be detected in the multiple framing by the windshield, window- and doorframes and mirrors. The narrative and visual solutions typical to Kiarostami films – such as the aimless lingering around, driving in a space that gradually becomes mythical – are actually ritually "bathed" in the formal arsenal of European cinema. Until this film, in interviews, Kiarostami had related in a confusing way to this, especially to Bresson, the neo-realism, modernism or the French New Wave (See Elena 2005, 16). *Certified Copy* is finally a statement, an evidence of his films' affinities with European art cinema, appearing, more specifically, as *a certified copy* of the European modernist tradition. But his imitating gesture – recognisable in formal solutions and a conceptual background – does not belong to what Sándor Radnóti calls the "traditionalist" way of imitation, generated by a naive respect for tradition, but rather to the "traditional" one motivated by a "reflected" relationship to the tradition (Radnóti 1999, 71). While Kiarostami's film actively reflects upon his relationship to European modernism – by deliberately merging his well known formal, visual "signature" solutions with those of European modernism, thus presenting its relation to this latter as interchangeable, the original–copy hierarchy as irrelevant, or even the copy better than the original (because it reinforces tradition), – he is implicitly referring to the relationship of modernism to traditional ways of storytelling in cinema.

This reveals another similarity – besides the obvious storyline and imagery – with Rossellini's *Journey to Italy,* one of the alleged "models" of Kiarostami's film. According to Laura Mulvey, *Journey* is arguably the first modern film, in which "new cinema seems to be coming into being before one's eyes," through a gender-related distinction between a new kind of narrative favouring "reflection" – represented by the female protagonist – and the tradition of "pushing action forward" – represented by the hero (2009, 113). Besides a similar thematisation of narrative modes, in *Certified Copy* there is also – for the first time in Kiarostami's work – a gender-specific delimitation of the gaze. It not only continues the discourse on the feminine point of view introduced in the previous two films, but, by turning it towards the external world for the first time, also confronts it openly and systematically with the male gaze.[10] This

performing stardom, as actors or as stars who are forced to perform themselves" (2009, 108).

10 One could argue that this is already happening in *Ten*, where the feminine attitude is confronted with that of a society privileging men, in the taxi driver's dialogues with her son. But here the clash of attitudes remains episodic, just an aspect of the

gesture ensures the double significance of *Certified Copy* in the work of Kiarostami. On the one hand, it has all the formal and conceptual features of a synthesis, which means that we are witnessing here the birth of a possible new trilogy.[11] On the other hand, this closure appears as a new beginning: an opening towards an Occidental tradition of sophisticated, self-reflexive visual representation.

Tahereh's Unseen Look

The film is the third in the line of Kiarostami's films emphasising a feminine point of view – after *Ten* (2002) and *Shirin* (2008) –, a new series interpreted by Laura Mulvey as a return of Tahereh's unseen look from *Through the Olive Trees* (*Zire darakhatan zeyton*, 1994) (2009, 134). Ishagpour even identifies a hidden "intercultural" link between *Certified Copy* and *Shirin*: Arezzo, where She lives, is where Piero della Francesca painted the fresque *Battaglia de Eraclio e Cosroe* (1452–1466), Cosroe being Shirin's beloved husband (2010, 36). As if, considering Francesco's painting as a "window" to the legendary events of Persian history, Kiarostami would justify his choice to make a "European" film in Europe, thus engaging his film in an intercultural dialogue, or rather, *returning the gaze*. The representation of rigidly delimitated, gender-specific social roles and a difference between the female and male relationship to truth and reality, reflected in a different attitude to the object of their gaze, also appears as an element of continuity in *Ten*, *Shirin* and now in *Certified Copy*. Men seem to be aiming at the immediate appropriation of what they see, while women appear as trying to understand it, interpret it and make it an organic part of their lives. This very basic difference – as thematised in these tree films – also reflects the paradoxical nature of the female existence: it appears that exactly its very essence, intuition and imagination, remains unnoticed or unvalued by men. That is why waiting for that specific *attention* or *gaze* that discovers the *original* in them is at the core of their being. Or, as Jean-Luc Nancy points out, "Looking is regarding and consequently respecting" (2005, 38).

"The model is the original," says the female protagonist of *Certified Copy*, while her image is reflected on the portrait of Musa Polimnia, a Tuscan version of

heroine's journey of initiation into the new role of "independent woman." On the other hand, the scenes of arguments with her son are prefiguring the discussion between She and James during their journey by car.

11 A logical continuation of the previous one, the *Koker trilogy*, including *Where is the Friend's house?* (*Khane-ye doust kodjast?*1987), *Life and Nothing More* (1992) and *Through the Olive Trees* (1994).

La Gioconda. In this palimpsest of images, the issue of original appears as of secondary importance (as if reinforcing James's point of view), but her partner will not recognise the original, the "real thing" in her until she *is representing herself* in the last scene *as a picture*, an odalisque lying on her side, an "objet petit a," with the Lacanian term: the *object of desire* [Figs. 1–2]. Moreover, while posing as a model (the original of all paintings), she is pronouncing James's name stutteringly, just like her brother in law calls her sister, "lingering over her name," a gesture earlier labelled "original" by James. László Tarnay is right when stating that while with this imitating gesture she is obviously expecting her partner to recognise in it a "certified copy" and repeat her sister's loving attitude, she seems to be forgetting that for James a copy is not certified due to its (causal or similarity) reference to the original. As he is repeatedly pointing out, a certified copy is, as it is, an original (Tarnay, 2011). But, on the other hand, she is being spontaneous and intuitive (herself) exactly by apparently forgetting about previous discussions. She is improvising, revealing herself, once again, as "the real thing," an original, *a woman and an actress*. All this is reinforcing Tarnay's observation that the issue of the "certified copy" is a matter of *aspect* in this film, it depends on the gaze (or who is looking at what), or, in Nancy's term, *regard*, responsible for the oscillation characteristic to the film.

Similarly to all his films – as the same Nancy emphasises –, here Kiarostami "substitutes the gaze for images and signs – he mobilizes them, engaging them toward a look and the look towards what is real" (2005, 92). *She* appears here as an odalisque, a well known, recurrent image of the history of painting. All over the history of visual arts – beyond feminist film theory – representations of women are always implying the gaze, i.e. reflecting the socio-cultural parameters of the actual visual culture, a well defined need of the spectator. Hippolyte Taine, one of the theorists of modern painting, is even identifying woman and painting, when saying "one wants to own them and put them on display" (1867, 76). Just like in so many Impressionist paintings (in *Olympia* by Manet, for example), the female protagonist of *Certified Copy*, represented as picture, is not a passive "object of desire," but she is looking back at us, and, by a disturbing contemplation, is engaging the spectator into an "adventure of the gaze."

In the Hollywood film practice, the gaze of protagonists is mostly serving the perfect narrative illusion and it only rarely becomes a distinct topic, like in the genre of the noir and such ekphrastic narrations built around pictorial representations of women like Preminger's *Laura* (1944) or *Woman in the Window* (1944) by Fritz Lang. Contrarily to this, in the European cinema, the alienation of a couple is often reflected in unusual visuals: in the Italian new realism, in modernist films or the French New Wave imagery, the deliberately framed pictures representing uncanny sceneries are "looking back," resisting the

gaze just as female characters are resisting the stereotypical, patriarchal attitude considering them either sexual objects and lovers, or mothers and wives.

In this respect, Kiarostami's film is closely related to Rosellini's *Journey to Italy* (1954), *Contempt* (*Le mépris*, 1963) by J. L. Godard and Antonioni's *The Night* (*La Notte,* 1961).[12] Moreover, due to the already mentioned element of uncertainity, the "as if"-likeness, Youssef Ishagpour also detects similarities with *Last Year in Marienbad* (1961) (2010, 33). In all these films, the miscommunication of a couple appears as a pretext to a contrastive presentation of major film concepts and principles. Besides, the films of Rossellini and Godard are intertextually related: we see the protagonists of *Contempt* leaving the film theatre where *Journey to Italy* is being screened. Due to its affinities with these paradigmatic films, *Certified Copy* is an evidence of Kiarostami's European heritage, but also that of his intention to "fill up" this latter with new content in a time when the "death of cinema" is being feared. As Thomas Elsaesser puts it, "Europe is being re-colonized by its own former colonials" (2005, 493).[13] The "Italian connection" is represented by the setting and the topic, while Juliette Binoche represents France, a country that had "adopted" Kiarostami when he was marginalised in his country under the accusation of "Occidentalism." She also stands for the contemporary European "art film," but for the Hollywood stardom-tradition as well, due to a touch of "glamour." Laura Mulvey's affirmation regarding the role of stars in *Journey to Italy* in marking "a point of transition in cinema history," as "the characters enable the film to create an opposition between different kinds of cinemas, divided between modern and conventional modes of cinematic story-telling" thoroughly applies to Kiarostami's first "European film." Even more so, because, as already mentioned, these storytelling directions are divided, in the words of the same Mulvey, "along gender lines" (2009, 109–110).

Italy – Seen by Women and Men

In Kiarostami's films, the car is a space of intimate confessions, situations heavy with tension, while the windshield becomes a representation of the subjective point of view framing sceneries, people and faces leaning in and out, asking for and giving information. In *Ten*, we hardly see anything from the external world: this film is rather the story of an inner journey, staging an

12 See, for example, Frank Kausch (2010, 39).

13 Among his examples there are directors belonging to the Turkish community (Fatih Akin, for example) in Germany or those representing the vibrant Asian community in Britain (like Gurinder Chadha). He also dedicates chapters to Ruy Guerra, original from Mozambique and working, after Brazil, in France, and he repeatedly returns to the case of Latin American Raul Ruíz, making films in Portugal and France.

individual process of understanding and preparation for a new role (that of the divorcee in Iran). The mysterious heroine of *Certified Copy* is taking his partner by car to places that are important for her, a museum, a church, a hotel room, all cave-like, dim places, archetypes of female nature, just like her antiquity shop, where James descends to at the beginning of the film. She is repeatedly trying to attract him into her rather sentimental world susceptible to poetry, mysticism and representations, animated by an urge for interpretations. Her partner resists the temptation, directing his attention to the outer world, the typical Tuscan scenery, the road with cypresses, also well known from the films set in Iran. Rosellini's film starts with this image of the road with cypresses, seen through the windshield of a fancy car. When the husband is taking over the wheel, the parallel conversation leading to the alienation of the two starts: Alexander, the husband (George Sanders) seems to discredit all that his wife Katherine (Ingrid Bergman) is attracted to: the freshly inherited house full with art objects, poetry, but most of all, her "incurable" romanticism. He is apparently harsh, intolerant and impatient. A version of the scene with him asking for wine, from the Italian maid who doesn't understand a word is actually coming back in the restaurant episode of *Certified Copy*: both men are keen to go back to work.

The gender-specific opposition between the modern and traditional storytelling is also valid for *Certified Copy*: "Katherine carves out a space for reflection and journey into the past. Alex is impatient to drive the action forward." Thus masculinity and its anxieties identify with "conventional action-driven narrative and femininity with the kind of cinema that would enable Rossellini's 'essay', that is, his journey to Naples and its past" (Mulvey 2009, 110).[14] Thus, in the film of Rossellini, the couple will move in different spaces, along different narrative lines from the beginning. Katherine is taking the car, is visiting museums and contemplating the everyday life of Italians from behind the windshield. When her gaze is repeatedly attracted by images of mothers and children, her exclamation, "how beautiful they are!" betrays her repressed grief over her childless marriage, well hidden behind an aesthetic statement. The same distant, "windshield-attitude" appears during all her visits and walks: every time she is accompanied by a guide. As Laura Mulvey puts it, Rossellini's film represents "an extension into cinema of the blurred boundaries between the material and the spiritual, reality and magic, life and death," all revealed during "a journey leading to a space of uncanny dominated by the ruins of an ancient civilization" (2009, 104). The museums, churches, the steamy volcano and

14 As Mulvey points out, through this opposition, a "new cinema seems to be coming into being before one's eyes," *Journey to Italy* being considered by many the first modernist film (2009, 113).

Pompeii are symbolic spaces for her, conferring a mythical dimension to the marital conflicts and female–male dissimilarities. In the space filled with statues and busts of Roman historical characters, sort of replying to the allusive comment of the guide about a female torso, while standing in front of a monumental statue, Katherine concludes that "they are just like men today" [Fig. 3].

Similarly, in *Certfied Copy* the discourse on the female–male relationship is repeatedly doubled by visual representations of reality, for example in the group of statues we hardly see directly, only reflected in the mirrors of a motorbike admired by James and interpreted by the female character, in a sort of improvised ekphrasis [Fig. 4]. As Ágnes Pethő points out, this is also evoking a similar scene from *Last Year in Marienbad*, where a statue is being interpreted by the characters and the interpretation is applied to their situation (2011, 134). Godard's *Contempt*, retelling over and over the Odyssey, shows the same *mise en abyme* structure. In *Journey to Italy* and *Contempt*, Capri is a mythical space, where the legendary sirens (the tempters) live, the place where the male protagonists are heading for, only to realise that the magic is gone: the husband from the former fails to start a relationship with the French girl, while Paul from the latter remains unaffected by the charms of his wife, repeatedly trying, just like a siren, to attract his attention. Ironically, their alienation becomes definitive on Capri, the island of "sensual attractions." But while Catherine, the heroine from *Journey to Italy*, is waiting persistently for her husband (although trying to deny this), scrutinising the sea, like a true Penelope, Camille (Brigitte Bardot) from *Contempt* would follow the modern version of the story, "á la Prokosch," and leaves with the first "suitor."

All three films excel in representing alienation both verbally and visually: in *Journey to Italy* it appears as a growing physical distance, dramatically represented in the last scene, where the couple is separated by the religious crowd, while in *Contempt* Camille and Paul are talking to each other through the walls of their apartment. Kiarostami assimilates both cinematic traditions, when he complements the linguistic codes – French is the language of mutual understanding and intimacy, while English, that of the man, rational and practical – with images emphasising distance and difficulties of communication. By doing this, he is multiplying the meanings of the illustration on the front cover of the book being launched in the first scene, responsible for the conceptual framework of the film.

A Double Look: Images with Multiple Meanings

This picture – two statue profiles facing each other –, just like those pictures where we can see a rabbit or a duck at the same time, reveals the essence of all

pictures: ambivalence and multiple meaning [Figs. 5–6]. As a specific type of pictures, called "self-reflexive" by W. J. T. Mitchell (2006) shows the similarity of the two faces, with the gap between them emphasising both the difference and the perspective structure of the whole image. It is like a code that, at the same time, refers to the already mentioned ambivalence-principle, the aesthetic tradition of the original–copy discourse, the visible–invisible opposition, implicitly the issue of authenticity of pictures in the Age of the digital, the problems of communication and cultural differences, the tension between the male and female "ways of looking," their "opposite directions" and, finally, to the perspective as a symbolic form that the creation of visual illusion of reality relies upon since the Italian Renaissance in Western Culture. This picture is also a synthesis of Persian, Muslim and Western visual representations: an allusion to both figurative and nonfigurative representation, in a frame responsible for the illusion of reality (see also Nancy 2001, 34). Or, as Panofsky points out in his *Perspective as a Symbolic Form*, perspective transforms the painting into a window to reality (1997, 27).

This visual pattern is present everywhere in the film: the road with cypresses, the streets reflected on the windshield, the peculiar use of space between mother and son, then She and James as symbol of their relationship (both of them are following her from distance) [Figs. 7–9.]. Similarly, the *mise en abyme* mirror-constructions are all variations of this image with multiple meaning. The typical Kiarostami-shot – a car in a distance while the conversation is overheard off-shot – has the same structure (the distance between the spectator and the image is "filled up" with the sound, just as the sentimental soundtrack fills up the growing distance between Camille and Paul in *Contempt*.

In *Journey to Italy*, the protagonists are moving in separate spaces from the very beginning, their lonely journeys being reflected in visual patterns such as the parallel, separate beds in the bourgeois bedroom, the position of their chairs on the terrace, the image of white boats circulating between Naples and Capri, their walking separately on the deserted streets of Pompeii, and, finally, the already mentioned closing scene, a symbol of traumatic divorce. [Figs. 10–12.] All three male protagonists, who are seeing in reality and its representations only facts and technical issues (Pompeii just an archaeological site, Musa Polimnia is just another copy, filmmaking is just work and business), are repeatedly confronted with artworks representing harmony and some sort of archaic, mythical idea of communion. While male characters consider art as part of reality, their female partners are discovering signs everywhere and are ready for interpretations: for them, *reality is an artwork, a representation already*. It is not a coincidence that the background for these two contradictory

spectatorial attitudes is Italy, where reality and its representations are frequently overlapping: every square meter is hiding cultural relics, Pompeii being the best example of this.[15]

Besides the already mentioned contrastive presentation of narrative traditions and gender-specific gazes, Rossellini's film plays on the duplicity of images, emphasising both the transparency-principle of neo-realism (the picture is a window that opens to reality) and the natural opacity, symbolic nature of all pictures (reality re-framed by the windshield, a museum or an archaeological site). *Contempt* also deals with the gap between representation and "the real thing," human relationships deliberately "translated," distorted by writers, film directors and producers. Kiarostami's *Certified Copy* – of the book, of the reality and the films of Godard and Rossellini – closes with a metaphor of this paradox: the image of an art critic stuck between *an open window and a mirror*. While Aaron Cutler points out the "welcoming frame" – the window – in this closing image (2011, 13), Ishagpour emphasises the "reintroduction of doubt" in the relationship between the gaze and the image, in a moment when everything started to become present, real, through the introduction of the mirror (2010, 34). With this unprecedented consciousness, manifested in the wide use of this metaphor, Kiarostami is not only "enlarging his conceptual working site," but he most specifically reintegrates his work in the three main paradigms of film theory, represented by the metaphors of the frame, the window and the mirror. These have been recently reintroduced and reinterpreted by contemporary film theory, especially by the phenomenological approach emphasising the reversibility between perception and expression, spectator and film.[16] As Vivian Sobchack puts it: "The first two, the frame and the window, represent the opposing poles of classical film theory, while the third, the mirror, represents the synthetic conflation of perception and expression that characterizes most contemporary film theory. What is interesting to note is that all three metaphors

15 Even though *Certified Copy* is not referring openly to the issue of original in the age of the digital, it is tempting to draw a parallel between the two kinds of spectatorships as thematised in the above analysed films and two attitudes of the users of new media that László Tarnay touches upon apropos of the film: *immersion* into a virtual world (a projection of the self into it) and *interactivity*, an active use of the new tools ensuring the enjoyment of this (created) world. But, as he points out, in the case of new media, these two attitudes are interrelated: interactivity is actually ensuring immersion into the created virtual world. He also emphasises that in the case of immersivity the issue of original is irrelevant, as this kind of reasoning is only accessible to somebody able to take a distance from the given world/work of art (2011).

16 See also the recent book of Thomas Elsaesser and Malte Hagener, re-evaluating some big chapters of film theory through major "frame-metaphors:" the window, the door and the mirror (2010).

relate directly to the screen rectangle and to the film as a static *viewed object*, and only indirectly to the dynamic activity of viewing that is engaged in by both the film and the spectator, each as *viewing subjects*" (1992, 17).[17] Sobchack goes on in defining the metaphor of the frame as "emblematic of the *transcendental idealism* that infuses classical formalism and its belief in the film object as *expression-in-itself*," the window as "emblematic of the *transcendental realism* that informs realist film theory and its belief in the film object as *perception-in-itself*" and, finally, the metaphor of the mirror that "entails a critical judgment of the cinema that is as damning as it is descriptive. It condemns the very ontological being of cinema as substitutive (rather than expansive) and deceptive (rather than disclosing). It reflects the viewer only to point to his or her subjection to signs and meanings produced by an always already dishonest and subjugating 'other'" (1992, 18).

As we have seen, in *Certified Copy* the complexity of the mirror metaphor goes beyond the representational issues of cinema, also referring to the philosophical-existential problems of a couple and ontological questions of art in general. The windshield, a "signature" figure of Kiarostami's films, appears here as a synthesis of all three representational metaphors: a frame conferring a symbolic interpretation to reality, a window opening to the world and, finally, a mirror disqualifying the two previous interpretations of cinema and leaving us with a confusing and deceptive reflection of reality. As Frank Kausch has observed, the projections are transforming the windshield into a "discontinued tissue of the world, where meaning dissolves in its own repetition."[18] Moreover, the image of the two protagonists reflected through the windshield – a version of the book cover with the two profiles facing each other – appears to him as a compression of the "shot-countershot." Once again, Kiarostami has found a figurative solution representing his alternative to this narratological unit generally missing from his films. The consequent, repeated thematisation and inventive formal representation of looking – and, more specifically, of the feminine gaze – makes a new trilogy of *Ten*, *Shirin* and *Certified Copy*, in Youssef Ishagpour's words "most Iranian and universal" (2010, 39). What we witness happening here, is not only a submersion of Kiarostami's cinema in the modernist and "auteur" tradition of European cinema, but rather European

17 It is worth mentioning here, that *Shirin* seems to be an exception to this rule, by thematising viewing directly as a dynamic, sensual activity, besides a more traditional, psycho-analytical reference to the spectator's identification processes in front of the cinematic screen, in Ishagpour's words: each spectator is "making up" her/his own film (2010, 34).

18 "Un tissu discontinu du monde ou le sens se dissout dans sa propre reprise" [Translation by me, H. K.] (Kausch 2010, 39).

cinema becoming world cinema, (re)discovering its cultural identity and importance in the eyes of the Other.[19]

References

Cutler, Aaron. 2011. Certifying a Copy. An Interview with Abbas Kiarostami. *Cinéaste*, (Spring): 12–15.

Elena, Alberto. 2005. *The Cinema of Abbas Kiarostami*. London: SAQI in association with Iran Heritage Foundation.

Elsaesser, Thomas and Malte, Hagener. 2010. *Film Theory. An Introduction Through the Senses*. New York, and London: Routledge.

Elsaesser, Thomas. 2005. *European Cinema. Face to Face with Hollywood*. Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press.

Ishagpour, Youssef. 2010. Kiarostami hors ses murs: Copie Conforme. *Trafic*, no. 75, (Autumn): 30–38.

Kausch, Frank. 2010. Certified Copy non réconciliés. *Positif*, no. 591 (Mayi): 38–39.

Mitchell, W. J. T, Grønstad Asbjørn, Grønstad and Vågnes Øyvind, Vågnes. 2006. What do Pictures Want? Interview with W. J. T. Mitchell. *Image&Narrative*, vol. VII, issue 2, (15). *http://www.imageandnarrative.be/inarchive/iconoclasm/gronstad_vagnes.htm*

Mulvey, Laura. 2009. *Death 24X a Second. Stillness and the Moving Image*. London: Reaktion Books.

Nancy, Jean-Luc. 2001. *L'Evidence du Film. Abbas Kiarostami. Abbas Kiarostami and Jean-Luc Nancy in Conversation*. Bruxelles: Yves Gevaert Editeur.

Panofsky, Erwin. 1997. *The Perspective as a Symbolic Form*. New York: Zone Books.

Pethő, Ágnes. 2011. *Cinema and Intermediality. The Passion for the In-Between*. Newcastle upon Tyne: Cambridge Scholars Publishing.

Radnóti, Sándor. 1999. *The Fake: Forgery and its Place in Art*. Rowman and Littlefield: Lanham MD.

Sobchack, Vivian. 1992. *The Address of the Eye: a Phenomenology of Film Experience*. Princeton: The Princeton University Press.

19 On this, see Thomas Elsaesser: "It is as if European cinema first had to learn to be world cinema, with all the dangers of self-othering this entails, before it can be (once more?) European, that is to say, before it recognizes its part in the process of becoming a stranger to its own identity, while no longer understanding this identity only 'face to face with Hollywood'" (2005, 511).

Taine, Hippolyte. 1867. *Notes sur Paris. Vie et opinions de M. Frédéric-Thomas Graindorge.* Paris: L. Hachette et Cie.

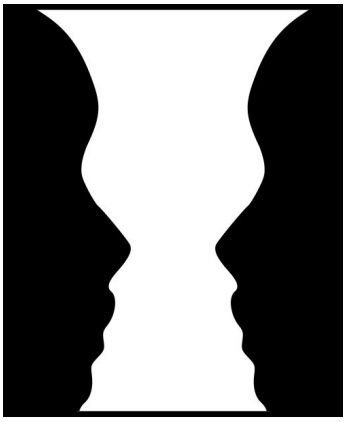
Tarnay, László. 2011. Az eredeti eszméje és az új médiumok. Kiarosztami *Hiteles másolat* című filmje alapján [The Ideal of the Original and the New Media. Apropos of *Certified Copy* by Kiarostami]. *http://apertura.hu/2011/tavasz/tarnay.*

List of Figures

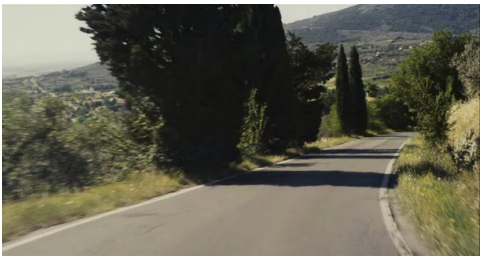
Figures 1–2. The Occidental tradition of representing women and the thematised gaze: Éduard Manet *Lady with a Fan, Nina de Callias* (1873) and Juliette Binoche in *Certified Copy* (Abbas Kiarostami, 2010).

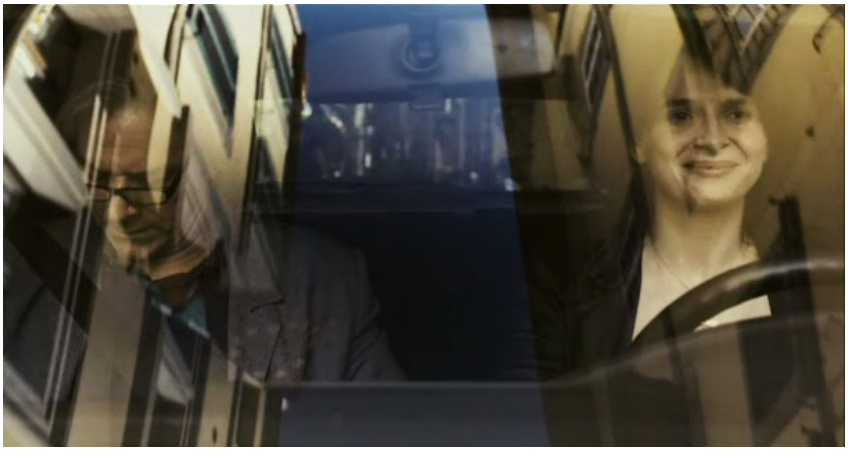
Figures 3–4. Human relationships "doubled" in visual representations: Katherine in *Journey to Italy* recognises all men in a monumental statue seen in the museum, while in *Certified Copy* the group statue interpreted by the protagonists appears reflected in two mirrors at the same time.

Figures 5–6. The self-reflexive picture on the front cover of James's book – just like the so-called "ambivalent pictures" – revealing the very nature of all images: ambivalence and multiple meaning.



Figures 7–9. Perspective as a symbolic form becomes a visual pattern in Kiarostami's film, standing for the tradition of western pictorial representation and revealing human relationships.





Figures 10–12. Composition with parallel lines and perspective as symbolic representation of the alienation in Rossellini's *Journey to Italy*.

ACTA UNIV. SAPIENTIAE, FILM AND MEDIA STUDIES, 5 (2012) 73–86

The Face of the Landscape in Béla Balázs's Film Theory[1]

Izabella Füzi
University of Szeged (Hungary)
E-mail: fuziza@yahoo.com

Abstract. In establishing the concept of cinematic image, Béla Balázs's film theory relies on terms and concepts drawn from classical aesthetics. The everyday (and aesthetic) situation of viewing nature implies totalisation and anthropomorphism of nature, distanciation. Balázs, in contrast, opts for the merging of distant contemplation and absorbed participation, which makes his aesthetic position slightly different from that of his early mentor, Georg Simmel. This is part of his conceptualisation of cinema as a new site of articulation, a negotiation between subject and object, body and spirit, flesh and soul, surface and depth, inside and outside. Accounting for the structure of looking as both the subject and the object are becoming images, Balázs adopts a surprisingly modernist position which anticipates the function of the landscape in Antonioni, Pasolini, and Godard.

The primary concern of early film theoreticians or aestheticians was to establish the medium specific features of cinema which would grant the status of art to this new medium. In the 18–19th century aesthetic thinking, differentiation of various branches of art was possible based on the theory of beautiful and on demarcations draught between art and nature, art and purposeful action. At the same time, the specialisation of arts and media – based on their "material" or signifying possibilities – led to the sovereignty of literature as a paradigmatic branch of art and to a monomedial narrowing down of the other arts (viewed by Pfeiffer [1999] as configurations of media). Assigning a place for cinema within these terms was not an easy task, considering the altogether new experiences viewers of the first moving pictures were confronted with. My paper deals with Béla Balázs's writings on cinema which manifest the ambition of both linking the aesthetic experience with cinematic spectatorship and setting forth the novelty of this experience. My proposal is a contribution to the analysis of one moment of the transition

1 This paper was supported by the János Bolyai research Scholarship of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences. For their suggestions at various stages of the writing, I would like to thank Ervin Török and Ronan McKinney.

between a traditional way of defining aesthetic experience and accounting for a new type of mediation. In this respect, I regard the concept of the medium as a historical configuration affected by the unceasing competition among media, the relation between arts and media.[2]

Béla Balázs is acknowledged today as a controversial figure living and working in a period deeply troubled by political and cultural problems. In the early days of his youth, these concerns were shared by a group of young intellectuals gathering around their most prominent figure, György Lukács. Dismissing the values of the 19th century positivism, nationalism and the mainstream artistic tendencies of their era, they were critical towards the modernist projects coming from the West, too. In the void of this spiritual crisis, they sought for aesthetic solutions answering both the situation of the alienated individual and the problems of society. In Balázs's *Journals*, there is a recurrent archetypical situation in the several attempts to formulate the basic mechanism of aesthetic experience. This situation concerns the conscious split between, but also a possible fusion of distant contemplation and absorbed participation. In an entry from 28 May 1904, he notes: "I have to see myself writing […] for my mood to be complete it is necessary the sensory experience of my loneliness, of the beauty of my situation born from my imagination. And this is the way I view nature, too. When I take a look from the mountain-top crest wandering in the mountains, when I see big lumps of mountains, I love to feel myself in the landscape [*táj*],[3] to imagine my posture in it, to see everything together with myself" (Balázs 1982, 41).[4]

"Seeing myself seeing" or being distant and being in the situation at the same time is accounted for as an experience related to landscape painting in a later

2 Mary Ann Doane formulated the question in a very elegant and inspiring way: "The proliferation of terms such as multimedia, mixed media, intermedia, and hybridization in recent years does not necessarily herald the end of the notion of an isolated medium or of these debates about medium specificity. Implicit in the concept of intermediality, for instance, is a drama of identity and its loss and subsequent regeneration. As media converge, they do not simply accumulate but generate new forms and possibilities that rely on the 'haunting' effect of earlier singular media (see Bolter and Grusin)" (Doane 2007, 148).

3 The Hungarian word "táj" (used in this form as a concept in his film aesthetics, too) has many senses: it primarily denotes a land, a region or area, and it is used in relation to nature. Evidently, as Balázs remarks "not every piece of land is a landscape" (1982, 54). The land appearing in an image (the proper landscape?) is expressed in Hungarian (as in English) by a compound word: "tájkép" (land + image). I will mark this distinction between the Hungarian words, as Balázs uses the expression of "tájkép" once in this passage. Of course, "táj" and "tájkép" are synonymous, but the difference still merits attention, even if Balázs intends to integrate the imagistic features of the landscape already in the land itself.

4 Unless otherwise noted, the passages from Hungarian are my translation, I. F.

entry from 1905: "nature without man – even if it brings a wild devotion in me sometimes – does not satisfy me in itself. It is an old experience that I prefer painted landscapes with one or two figures which encompass the mood of the landscape [*táj*] in a way. If this is the case, I am yearning to belong to that region [*belevágytam a vidékbe*] and to meet that person. In nature, what interests me is its relation with man. (Moods which are related to lands [*táj*] and which are the essence of their beauty and the purpose of the art relating to them, are nothing else than this relation. The painter beholds what that is and emphasises what it is in relation with.) […] When I am wandering about outside and I feel the soul of nature, on the highest degree of ecstasy and tension, I always wait for it: now, now! It must be that someone is coming to meet me at that turning point, a man whose surroundings are these, for whom the feeling which heaves in me now is his essence, a man with whom we would recognise and understand each other. *The man in whom this surrounding nature became conscious of itself*" (Balázs 1982, 210).

These expressive, immersive and conscious relations to nature are the cornerstones of Balázs's aesthetics entitled *Aesthetics of Death*, published in Hungarian in 1908 and dedicated to Georg Simmel. The axiom of this aphoristic and often paradoxical treatise on the meaning of art is that "self-consciousness of nature is man, self-consciousness of man is art" (Balázs 1908, 18). These enigmatic and rather poorly elaborated formulations hint at different levels of consciousness and qualities which transcend nature, respectively man. Art excels by giving form to the formless, as the highest form of consciousness. The *Aesthetics of Death* oscillates between the Kantian position that art is a transcending intuition of the Whole, a special attitude in perceiving nature, life, man, and the Nietzschean conjecture that every giving of form has to do with death and closure: "if death gives form to every thing, then I kill what I form. Every portrait is a partial suicide…" (Balázs 1908, 35). How does the cinema give form to nature and man? What is the status of the image as an art form and as a form of mediation?

The main point that Balázs's first film aesthetics, *Visible Man* (1924) hinges on, is the project of establishing a concept of cinematic image. The new visual dimensions of the moving image make possible the replacement of a conceptual culture and the propagation of a visual culture. The aesthetic project set forth in both his aesthetics, *Visible Man* and *The Spirit of Film* (1930), is to view cinema as a new site of articulation, a negotiation between subject and object, body and spirit, flesh and soul, surface and depth, inside and outside. *The Visible Man* and *The Spirit of Film* propose to define the novelty of the new cinematic medium in the context of a visual culture which promised to make man visible again. While *legibility* based on printed words made the expressive potentialities of the body

unnecessary, the token of the new *visibility* is the body and its movements, opposed to the conceptual culture which "buried [human beings] under mountains of words and concepts" (Balázs 2009, 11). Balázs does not analyse this transition step by step, instead, he invests the new medium with aesthetic claims "elevating" it to the status of art.

In *Visible Man*, the initial valuation of the image is followed by many rival – and often hardly reconcilable – definitions. The concept of the (cinematic) image has also a wide range of synonymous expressions: face, physiognomy, body, gesture, surface – these translations of the image render the concept highly ambiguous. The "language" of film (or of gestures, of physiognomy) reveals a new way of seeing and experiencing through the expressive qualities of the previously degenerated and atrophied body. However, the body in itself cannot become "a sensitive medium of the soul" (Balázs 2009, 12), it needs a secondary shaping or processing through language – a language that offers a "visual corollary of human souls immediately made flesh" (Balázs 2009, 10). But how can film guarantee the passage between or the conjunction of soul and flesh, body and spirit, and not reproduce the shortcomings of verbal language which crystallised the soul through words, but left the body soulless and empty? Is this visual "corollary" a mere supplement or an unalterable consequence of the "soul made flesh?" Man becomes visible through a visible body, but does this body render the human soul, or rather "the spirit of film," the aim of the second aesthetics? These are the central figures and tropes of the Balázsian text, and they require a close examination before we term or classify his theory as "modernist," "anthropomorphic," or "revelationist."[5]

The body for Balázs is a multiple site of passage: something that is shaped by and shown by the language of film (a signified) hitherto invisible, and the site of signification through which something else will be shown or articulated (a signifier). In Foucault's terms, the body described by Balázs is a "heterotopia," a locus gathering multiple contrasting efforts of signification or translation and a master-word organising different fields of understanding: 1. the surface of unconscious inheritance (our gestures reflect "the spirit of … ancestors," Balázs [2009, 13]); 2. something that is produced by culture, but in which culture itself can materialise; 3. both the expression of personal and individual traits and the token of "redemption from the curse of Babel" isolating people from each other (2009, 14); and 4. as a catalogue of "standard forms" (2009, 13), body language requires a grammar and a vocabulary which can be learned, but "it lacks strict and binding rules" (2009, 13).

5 These are the labels Balázs is often tagged with in contemporary film theory: see Aumont (2003), Koch (1987), Turvey (2008).

The oppositional logic between exterior/interior, surface/depth is always transcended in Balázs; he is proposing terms which contract and display the opposites in a single term – often concluding in paradoxical statements. Film, for example, both belongs to the surface and has (?) a "deeper meaning," belongs both to the visible and the invisible. "A good film does not have 'content' as such. […] Film is a *surface art* and in it whatever is inside is outside" (2009, 19). On the other hand, "film seems not to want to dispense entirely with that quality of literary 'depth' which is to be found in a third, intellectual dimension: a dimension in which, *behind* the action visible on the surface, another, hidden, *meaningful action* can be guessed at" [emphasis in the original] (2009, 20). Surface and depth, inside and outside are in a vertiginous circulation as in a revolving door: these untotalisable definitions of film are based on the uncontrollable, divergent potentiality of the visual and auditory dimensions articulated in the two aesthetics.

To understand this kind of thinking, we must reveal the special movement and articulation of the Balázsian text. The style of his essayistic prose could be characterised through the short fragments based on an idea or metaphorical phrasing. This fragmentary character suits very well the theme of the writings – cinema –, as it reveals different aspects or views relating to the same concept or theme. The progression of the text charges the reader with the task of comprehending different aspects and viewpoints. Given the fact that the value and meaning of his terms and concepts changes from passage to passage, one can demonstrate the most contradictory thesis citing one or the other locus of the text. However, if we want to understand the claims of the text, we must comprehend it with taking into consideration the part–whole relationships – this is something that Balázs considered substantial in the case of cinematic spectatorship, too. In the case of reading, as in the case of film viewing, this means the linking of the movement of the eye (horizontally through the lines and also linearly in the case of viewing) and the comprehending work of the mind. Linking the sensory and the cognitive realms is precisely the project of aesthetics, that is, to render mutually adequate form and content, experience and cognitive categories. However, as one critic of "aesthetic ideology," Paul de Man pointed out: comprehension through the mind operates through gains and losses, and there is a moment when, saturated, it cannot encompass, or more precisely name, figure and hold together (i.e. substitute) the whole in itself. Instead, it represents a leap which stands for a lack, a failure of understanding.[6] It is for this reason that reconstructing (comprehending) the vivacity and movement of

6 Here I am alluding, of course, to the Kantian description of the mathematical sublime and de Man's further elaborations on this category. See Kant (1987); de Man (1996).

the Balázsian text does not mean the identification of a single correct meaning, but rather experiencing the multiplication of the text through the different emphases assigned to it. It is Balázs who phrases this feature of all cultural products: "anything that is not capable of reinterpretation will perish. Only the possibility of ever new misunderstandings can guarantee repeated attempts to understand anew" (2009, 216).[7] The articulation of Balázs's texts often resembles that of poetic texts: the fragments are divided into small fragments based on contrasts, using exclamations, figures and tropes, chiastic structures. The task of the reader as (s)he strives to comprehend the text corresponds to the activity to which Balázs gives the name of "theory:" the field which introduces us into an unknown territory which lacks the familiarity of experience.[8]

I will concentrate now on the problem of the face and of reading faces. Reflections on the close-up and the face are considered the pillars of his film aesthetics, even if these reflections never have been carried through their final consequences by the critical reception. According to Jacques Aumont, for example, his aesthetic is "idealistic," since "it is based on the hope of a revelation that it believes is possible because it believes fundamentally in the face as an organic unit, infrangible, total" (Aumont 2003, 139).[9] In my paper I will try to elaborate on another way of reading Balázs, taking my examples from his aesthetical writings and autobiographical novel as well.

The concept of the "face" has two major applications in Balázs. On the one hand he speaks of the face of things (everyday objects, the landscape, the mass, the machine, the race, class, etc.) – face here is attributed to things which do not have a "face" in the literal sense of the word. On the other hand there is the face of man framed by the close-up, often described in terms of "struggle", "field of battle" (2009, 31) or "duel of facial expressions" (2009, 37). The face of man at the same time can be "invisible," "polyphonic" (2009, 34.). It seems at first sight that in the first use of the term "face" Balázs makes a figural transfer or extension of the literal sense. In rhetoric, the figure of giving face is accounted for by the figure

7 This claim is announced in relation to the future of the sound film: because it is based on the photographed theatre, sound film has no future, according to Balázs, because it fixes every accent, intonation, etc., while the appeal of theatre consists in ever new interpretations.

8 "For by its nature experience can only work with phenomena that have already manifested themselves, and he lacks the technique with which to explore new situations. Film, however, is too costly for experimentation. In the realm of technology in general there is no experimenting on the off-chance. Theory begins by fixing on definite goals and calculating all their implications; only the pathways leading to those goals are then tested experimentally" (Balázs 2009, 6.).

9 Gertrud Koch's thesis on Balázs: "Balázs's strength, after all, rests with his aesthetic analysis of film, his insisting upon the priority of the expressive nature of the image over its semiotic determination" (Koch 1987).

of prosopopoeia which refers to a linguistic positioning (as the etymology of the word denotes: prosopon: 'face, person, mask,' poiein: 'to make').

Let us have a closer look at this figurative concept of the face. Balázs implies that things in themselves do not possess a face, only the way of looking at things can confer a face on them. To see the face of everyday objects means to remove the veil cast on the face by "our traditional, abstract way of seeing" (2009, 47). The face of the landscape presupposes a "subjective relation," too, which gains meaning in two different frames of interpretation. On the one hand this relation can be accounted for as *appropriation and anthropomorphism of the human mind regarding nature*: "Nature's soul is not something given *a priori* that can 'simply' be photographed. […] For us, however, the soul of nature is always our own soul reflecting itself in nature. This process of reflection can occur, but only through art" (2009, 54). The questioning of this kind of human understanding comes to the fore in *The Spirit of Film* – now in the terms of matter and form, objective and subjective – where it is extrapolated as the Kantian problem of meaning-attribution: "images may be no more than perceptions of pure objects. The all-pervasive principle of form comes from the human subject. Is there no way of escaping this human condition? Does pure objectivity simply not exist? Is the pure intuition of sheer existence an impossibility? Can we not simply see things as they are?" (2009, 165).

Balázs has two answers to this question: 1. Subjectivity is "inescapable," since in the image the position of the subject (its relation to the object) is already inscribed, while objectivity "is no more than an impression that certain shots may consciously create" (2009, 120) (the "reality effect" of cinema later theorised by so many). 2. The possibility of seeing only the objects without the involvement of the formative subjective principle is realised in films which "detach their objects from every conceivable context and from every relation with other objects. They are objects pure and simple. And the image in which they appear does not point to anything beyond itself, whether to other objects or to a meaning" (2009, 165).[10] We can draw two important conclusions regarding this second formulation of "objective" seeing. One is that the objectivity described here repeats the formulation of the effects of the face in close-up,[11] with

10 The dense continuation of this passage also merits attention: "And lo and behold! The same tendency reverses into its opposite. The pure object becomes pure phenomenon. The mere fact becomes mere image. Self-contained reality becomes an impression. In short, the reality film taken to its logical conclusion becomes its opposite: absolute film" (Balázs 2009, 164–165). The coincidence of the terms of opposition can be read in several ways here: as the critique of the oppositional relation in the first place, or as a vertiginous substitution along an invisible axis.

11 Contrary to the close-up of things and parts of the body, the face in close-up establishes a "new dimension." Isolated from its context, the image of the face

one difference: the face brings about an excess of meaning which has similar impact on the viewer as the loss of meaning. Second: subtracting subjective intuition from meaning attribution does not lead us to ontological certainty, as in the case of documentaries: "the image itself can never establish conclusively" if "the filmed events are authentic" (2009, 163) or not.[12]

The counterpoint for the anthropomorphic vision, then, is not some kind of secure and objective notion of reality, but a kind of vision which does not confer form and meaning to things. Balázs describes this kind of seeing in terms of the "invisible" – even in the cases of "proper" faces: there are "nuances about the palimpsest of the facial expressions of Asta Nielsen – that cannot be detected with the naked eye and, yet, which use our eyes to make a decisive impact, like a bacillus that we do not notice when we inhale it, but which is lethal nonetheless" (2009, 103). The "invisible countenance" created by the restraint or failed acting of the film star Sessue Hayakawa is another example of conveying a meaning which comes through the eyes, but is something larger than cognition or perception.

Another formulation of this vision, which precedes the meaning attribution of cognition, is made clear in the second definition (more properly, the origin) of the face of landscape: "landscape is a physiognomy, a face that all at once, at a particular spot, gazes out at us, as if emerging from the chaotic lines of a picture puzzle. A face of a particular place with a very definite, if also indefinable, expression of feeling, with an evident, if also incomprehensible, meaning. A face that seems to have a deep emotional relationship to human beings. A face that is directed towards human beings" (2009, 54). This should make us skeptical about the "Romantic intimacy with things" (see Tredell 2002, 35), a label Balázs was put under, or at least makes us ambivalent towards it. The face invoked in this passage is not the result of a one-way attribution (it is not an anthropomorphism as in the first case), rather a confrontation ("a face which gazes at us"), as the concepts lined up in the sentences above – emergence, expression, emotion, the claim of understanding and the failure of

detaches itself from space and time, cause–effect relations, from the known categories of our understanding. Interestingly enough, Balázs gives an example which recalls one of the "images" of the Kantian sublime: "the abyss into which a figure peers no doubt *explains* his expression of terror, it does not *create* it. The expression exists even without the explanation. It is not turned into an expression by the addition of an imagined situation" (2009, 105).

12 According to Balázs, only nature films possess the "absolute evidence of reality" (2009, 163); this impression of reality can be accounted for by the paradox that nature, experienced this way, is observed from an "unnatural" closeness, a mediation which makes our (human) point of view invisible.

comprehension[13] – testify it. The specularity of anthropomorphism which guaranteed the readability of the face of nature *and* of man is suspended here: the invocation through the face is the reverse case of the Romantic apostrophe. Unlike the Romantic poet, who invokes natural phenomena, inanimate objects and deceased persons to create his own poetic consciousness through the apostrophe (see Culler 1981, 149–171), here the landscape has the invocatory power to address the man.

Analysing the everyday landscape viewing situation, which became an exemplary topos in classical aesthetics, too, W. J. T. Mitchell identifies three specific attributes: looking at a landscape means 1. abstraction and totalisation of certain features while dispensing with others ("to ignore all particulars in favor of an appreciation of a total gestalt"); 2. preservation of the subject's position by withdrawing oneself to a "broader, safer perspective, an aestheticizing distance, a kind of resistance to whatever practical or moral claim the scene might make on us;" 3. consciousness of looking, the landscape situation makes visible the structure of looking itself (Mitchell 2002, vii-viii). The exemplarity of the landscape from the perspective of the cinematic image can be derived from the third claim, but – as we will see it – Balázs rethinks the first two claims attached to landscape from a modernist view.

To further elaborate on these points, it may be useful to confront Georg Simmel's and Balázs's conception of landscape. As a disciple of Simmel, Balázs was deeply influenced by the concept of "form," central to Simmel's aesthetic writings. Form for Simmel is a comprehensive, structuring force which is present not only in the reception of artworks, but also in everyday experience. For Simmel, the unifying power which manifests itself in the landscape, the face, the image[14] – aesthetic structures *par excellence* – is accounted for by the intertwining or merging of the subjective and the objective; it is the manifestation of an a-temporal "psychic act," unaccountable in terms of causality or chronological time. This form, in the case of landscape, is accounted for by the "mood" of the landscape, an inseparable and instantaneous configuration or constellation of subjective and objective forces. Mood pertains both to the landscape and to the beholder: it is at one and the same time the projection of a feeling and the form giving unity to landscape. (These two components cannot be

13 The representation of the "horrifying" quality of the machine and of the supernatural is centered around the category of "incomprehensible" or "unfathomable:" "*words cannot be understood when they are incomprehensible.* This is how human intelligence defends itself. But a sight *may be clear and comprehensible even though unfathomable. And that is what makes our hair stand on end*" (2009, 60).

14 See other texts by Simmel: *The Picture Frame: An Aesthetic Study* (1994) and *The Aesthetic Significance of the Face* (1959).

integrated in a cause–effect, before–after relationship.) The landscape achieves in this way what neither nature, nor the individual can achieve: it combines the unity characteristic of nature with the self-contained character of the individual. (Simmel deplores the tragedy of modern individualisation which confronts the subject with an unreconcilable dualism: "the individual entity strives towards wholeness, while its place within the larger whole only accords it the role of a part" [2007, 23].)

Landscape for Simmel is based on the mutual readability of man and nature. This statement, however, stumbles when it comes to formulate "the unique and actual" (2007, 28) mood of the landscape, conceived as the merging of subject and object. The abstractions we use to capture the mood of the landscape ("we call a landscape cheerful or serious, heroic or monotone, exciting or melancholic" [Simmel 2007, 28]) destroy its uniqueness and immediacy.[15] The landscape and its beholder – as a totalised wholeness –, merging into the unity of perception and feeling, proves to be ungraspable and unsignifiable. The "vividness of perception" cannot be "described with concepts" (2007, 28). The failure of signification, of naming does not hinder Simmel to compensate this loss through the unity of feeling.

Balázs takes over this passage from Simmel almost word for word; the landscape of Balázs, however, has an element whose equivalent we do not find in Simmel's account. Returning to the surroundings of Szeged – the birthplace he left in early childhood – he reflects on this experience both familiar and alien in his autobiographical novel,[16] in the following way: "there are lands in which we see something else or something more than beauty. They impress us as physiognomies, they have a definite expression which means something and wants something. I am not thinking of those general contents of mood which usually are designated as kind, severe, melancholic, or heroic. These are only varieties for decorative beauty. The something 'else', however, which you seem to glimpse in certain landscapes, looks back at you from them, as if you were known to them and they were waiting for you in this place to come to this region [*vidék*] finally. This kind of land, as if were touching you, handling you, stabbing you in the heart. It is not only about beauty. Lands that are addressing you in this way are of two different kinds. There is one in which all of a sudden you feel the painful sensation that you are far, in foreign places (and this has nothing to do with geographical distance or the exotic). Still, there are lands which you seem to

15 "It is only by effacing its immediate and actual character that I can reduce it to general concepts, such as melancholic, cheerful, serious or exciting" (Simmel 2007, 28).

16 Other motifs and elements of theoretical writings (as physiognomy, silence, face, for example) are to be found in Balázs's literary works and vice versa – they are often word for word takeovers.

recognise, although you have never seen them before. You recognise them as your proper home. Not as if they were more beautiful or more pleasant than other lands. Not at all. Often the sorrow of resignation melts into this feeling. But you feel as if you were anchored and big gates were closing in on you somewhere, and there is no more to say: here you are home. It is very peculiar that both lands are harrowing, and the two kinds of pain are deeply related. Since that farness, that foreignness is not a random place, but it is *your* farness where you are foreign. That is also your fate, too" (Balázs 1967, 226–227).

The passage could be read as a painful and lyrical account of the lack of identity and the related feeling of homelessness experienced by Central-European Jewish intellectuals, the fate of whom was shared by Balázs. Exile, rootlessness, loneliness from which – Balázs, like so many of his contemporaries – was seeking refuge (in transcendentalism, in Marxism, etc.) to compensate for the lack of national, ethnic, religious or group identity.[17] But it would be mistaken to fix the burden of this passage only in personal anxieties. The question of interest here is how the above mini-narrative stages the relation between subject and object through the concepts of the face, gaze, distance, identification, rupture. There are several outstanding features of the text that are striking in this regard. The first is the attempt to distance the described phenomena from the aesthetic quality of beauty. This implicit critique of beauty is reiterated in the dismissal of anthropomorphisms of land(scape) as "kind, severe, melancholic, or heroic" (human traits transferred to nature). The suspension of all known approaches to the landscape results in submitting oneself to the agency of the landscape. There is almost a tactile, bodily quality to the relation envisioned between the subject and the landscape which in its turn becomes subject, agent of the look. (More precisely, that "certain something more" in the landscape turns out to be the agent of the look.) If the landscape addresses the subject as a body, this contact can be approximated only through emotion and feeling.

Let's investigate the structure of this passage which gives us a model of seeing, more closely. The passage starts out with a model of perception: seeing "more than beauty" in a landscape confers the landscape with "a definite expression." But this expression is not something graspable or signifiable (in this aspect it resembles the category of the sublime in Kantian aesthetics, which is something else than beautiful, too). The landscape-viewer's inability to grasp this something else turns him into the object of the look – the first inversion of the fragment. The formulation ("as if you were known to them and they were waiting for you in this place") recalls Baudelaire's *Correspondances* ("L'homme

17 The passage alludes to the well-known figure of "homesickness in one's own home" of the turn-of-the-century Hungary, deploring intellectual belatedness and appearing mainly with Endre Ady's poems.

y passe à travers des forêts de symboles/Qui l'observent avec des regards familiers"). Baudelaire's "forest of symbols" is not a real forest, nor is Balázs's landscape a site of nature; they are "haunted" by the unknown and frightening despite their familiar gazes. Instead of confusing words, Balázs's landscape issues tactile sensations which can be interpreted as a substitution or extension of the gaze (already described in the ancient Greek philosophy). The exchange between optics and haptics (second inversion) in the second paragraph gives way to the language of emotions. This final inversion (which in its turn is based on chiastic reversals) will bring about a totalisation, a comprehension of that "something more," but not without loss – which is here expressed by the excess of pain and resignation. From the brake and rupture inscribed in the model of seeing – described by the asymmetrical character of the subject's seeing and the gaze of landscape – we end up in the reaffirmation of the sentient subject – through a loss, though.

Landscape is not something to contemplate, but it is not the exclusive object of sensory perception, of immersive absorption either. It hinders the proceeding of the aesthetic understanding, insofar it stages the failure of perception and comprehension, and ends up in an unanswered question regarding the subject. This landscape cannot be accounted for by the categories of closeness, remoteness, familiarity or strangeness. Like silence (another category worth of attention in Balázs), it is a transgressive concept which announces the gap built in the model of cognition. There is always a surplus ("something more, something else") to beauty, to cognition, an excess which cannot be grasped. The passage taken from the autobiographical novel concludes with the description of pain: the foreign landscape presumed familiar or familiar in its foreignness evokes "the sorrow of resignation," renouncing something that never belonged to it (as in the working of the figure of nostalgia). The description dramatises the solipsistic loneliness[18] of the subject, and points to a passage from the prosopopoeia of landscape to the prosopopoeia of man.

The central category of this dramatised situation is the gaze which is also invoked in the description of childhood dreams in the novel. This gaze has an imperative character in its "anxious, meaningless meaningfulness:" "the viola green colour of the sky in a dream can be so blood-curdlingly frightening because it is as if something else would be encompassed in it, something which is not a colour, but some meaning or intention, like a gaze which is fixed at you, like a calling which summons me and wants something from me. As if I have seen something that is not in fact destined to the eyes. As if something strange, not intended for the eye penetrated into my consciousness through my eyes,

18 This is the central category of Balázs's theory of lyric (*A lírai érzékenységről*).

because it could not break through any other way" (1967, 32–33). The sentences resound the statements and the tone of the other passage: "as if," excess, the gaze. This troubling character of this "something more" finds an expression through the exchange between the senses (feeling, looking, touching), reminding one of Baudelaire's *Correspondances* again, where different kinds of sensory perceptions are substituted, exchanged one for the other through the connective "comme," but this enumeration does not transport us to a transcendental realm above the senses.[19]

It is obvious that the above fragments (and many other in Balázs) approximate this very passage from the sensory, phenomenal world to the transcendental. Going beyond the comforting model of subject and object merging in the unity of perception, Balázs suggests that perception, and with that the visible, is made possible by an articulation or inscription which cannot be accounted for in terms of the phenomenal. The gaze of landscape is such a mark. In the "eyes" of the imperceptible and unreadable gaze, man is posited as a question, as a calling or an absence on which the gates of understanding are closed in. This primary and forceful gaze aims at the center of identity, the consciousness, through the eyes, and it is not the object of perception, but rather its condition. By being the object of this gaze can man face the "face" of the landscape. Linking cinema to an aesthetic model of viewing nature and making an image of the seen object and the seeing subject at the same time, accounts for Balázs's efforts to establish a continuity between determining questions of aesthetics and the aesthetic potentialities of the new medium. Accounting for the structure of looking, Balázs adopts a surprisingly modernist position which anticipates the function of the landscape in Antonioni, Pasolini, Godard invoked, for example, by Deleuze in the description of the perception-image.

References

Aumont, Jacques. 2003. The Face in Close-Up. In *The Visual Turn: Classical Film Theory and Art History*, ed. Angella della Vache, 127–150. New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press.

Balázs, Béla. 1908. *Halálesztétika* [Aesthetics of Death]. Budapest: Papirusz Book.

Balázs, Béla. 1967 [1946]. *Álmodó ifjúság* [Dreaming Youth]. Budapest: Magyar Helikon.

19 See Paul de Man's reading of Correspondances: Anthropomorphism and Trope in Lyric (1984).

Balázs, Béla. 1982. *Napló, 1903–1914* [Journal, 1903–1914], ed. Anna Fábri. Budapest: Magvető Könyvkiadó.

Balázs, Béla. 2009 [1924/1930]. *Early Film Theory. Visible Man and The Spirit of Film*, trans. by Rodney Livingston, Erica Carter. New York, Oxford: Berghahn Books.

Culler, Jonathan. 1981. Apostrophe. In *The Pursuit of Signs: Semiotics, Literature, Deconstruction*, 149–171. London: Routledge.

de Man, Paul. 1984. Anthropomorphism and Trope in Lyric. In *Rhetoric of Romanticism*, 239–262. New York: Columbia University Press.

de Man, Paul. 1996. Phenomenality and Materiality in Kant. In *Aesthetic Ideology*, 70–90. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.

Doane, Mary Ann. 2007. The Indexical and the Concept of Medium Specificity. *differences* vol. 18. no. 1: 128–152.

Kant, Immanuel. 1987. *Critique of Judgment*, transl. Werner S. Pluhar, Indianapolis, Cambridge: Hackett Publishing Company.

Koch, Gertrud. 1987. Béla Balázs: The Physiognomy of Things. *New German Critique* vol. 40 (Winter): 167–177.

Mitchell, W. J. T. 2002. Preface to the Second Edition of *Landscape and Power*: Space, Place and Landscape. In *Landscape and Power*, ed. W. J. T. Mitchell, vii–xiv. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Pfeiffer, Ludwig. 1999. *Das Mediale und das Imaginäre: Dimensionen kulturanthropolo-gischer Medientheorie.* Frankfurt/Main: Suhrkamp.

Simmel, Georg. 1959 [1901]. The Aesthetic Significance of the Face. In *Georg Simmel, 1858–1918: A Collection of Essays, with Translations and a Bibliography*, ed. Wolff Kurt H., 276–282. Columbus: Ohio State UP.

Simmel, Georg. 1994 [1902]. The Picture Frame: An Aesthetic Study. *Theory, Culture & Society* vol. 11 no. 1: 11–17.

Simmel, Georg. 1994 [1913]. The Philosophy of Landscape. *Theory, Culture & Society.* vol. 11 no. 1: 20–29.

Tredell, Nicolas. 2002. *Cinemas of the Mind. A Critical History of Film Theory*. Cambridge: Icon Books.

Turvey, Malcolm. 2008. *Doubting Vision. Film and the Revelationist Tradition*. Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press.

ACTA UNIV. SAPIENTIAE, FILM AND MEDIA STUDIES, 5 (2012) 87–106

Film in Depth. Water and Immersivity in the Contemporary Film Experience

Adriano D'Aloia
Università Cattolica del Sacro Cuore (Milan)
E-mail: adriano.daloia@unicatt.it

Abstract. Since its beginnings, cinema has recognised that water can visually give *matter* and *meaning* to human desires, dreams and secrets, eliciting suspense and fear. Using different aesthetical and technical strategies, contemporary cinema shows immersed and drowning bodies to represent and express intimacy and protection, suspense and fear, obsession and depression, state of shock, past or infancy trauma, hallucinations and nightmares, etc. The case of *enwaterment* (i.e. "water-embodiment") is significant because of its relevance to the point where psychoanalysis and philosophy meet. In this essay, I attempt to investigate what is actually meant today by making a bodily and sensible experience of film by analysing the substance of water and the figures of the drowning and immersed body. Cinema embodies aquatic modalities of perception and expression, pulling the viewer into a liquid environment that is the confluence between the film-body and the filmgoer-body.

The pupil is made of water.
Aristotle, *De Anima*, III

The true eye of the earth is water.
Gaston Bachelard, *L'Eau et les rêves*, 1942

A deep relationship binds water and cinema. Images and sounds stream on the screen like an inexhaustible flow of water, a 'mechanical fluidity' that perfectly expresses the spirit of modern times. In the beginning, cinema aimed both to provide a fluid rendering of reality and to astonish the spectators by shocking their senses. In Panorama of Gorge Railway (Thomas Edison, 1900), for example, the stream of an impetuous river is combined with the motion of the camera, placed on the front end of a train, in the opposite direction. The conflict between the movement of the water and that of the camera, and the

masses of spray and foam that seem to fly at and wet the camera, emphasise the spectators' sense of motion. The foaming waves of the sea have a key part in early British films like Rough Sea at Dover (Birt Acres, 1895), Dover Pier in a Storm (Cecil M. Hepworth, 1900) and Breaking Waves (Cecil M. Hepworth, 1900). In watching American falls from above, American side (Thomas Edison, 1896), the spectator experiences the power of waterfalls, even if the film consists of a single stationary shot. In Sutro Baths, Sutro Baths, No. 1 and Lurline Baths (Thomas Edison, 1897), a series of short films set in two swimming pools in San Francisco, the descent of bathers from the slipway and the swarming crowd in the pool create splashes of water up towards the camera, with an effect similar to that of the river foam in Panorama of Gorge Railway. The mechanical nature of cinematic fluidity emerges in Les bains de Diane à Milan (Louis Lumière, 1896) and Bathers (Cecil M. Hepworth, 1900), where through reverse motion, human bodies dive into and seemingly come out of the water. Very soon, water begins to immerse the body of the characters completely, e.g. in Visite Sous-Marine du Maine (Georges Méliès, 1898) and Divers: Diving for Treasure (Robert W. Paul, 1900). These films suggest an analogy between the transparency of water and the act of vision, evoking a conception of film viewing as an immersive experience that is capable not only of shocking and astonishing the spectator, but also of inviting and involving him or her into a specific 'sensorial space.'

Plenty of water has passed under the bridge of cinema since it took its first exploratory steps. In this essay, I argue that the choice of water as a setting and the expressive use of its properties (e.g. depth, density and transparency) as stylistic solutions in contemporary mainstream narrative cinema are functional to the constitution of specific 'water-based' film experiences. More and more often, contemporary cinema presents crucial scenes that represent immersed and drowning bodies in order to involve the spectators in an enveloping and breathtaking experience. Moreover, many contemporary films embody 'aquatic' modes of expression and perception, even if water is not explicitly used as a subject or a setting. These films tend to 'enwater' the spectators, i.e. embody them in water, in an immersive and fluid experience. Today the film-theatre is not simply a marvelous aquarium that confines the spectator to appreciating fine specimens at a distance, like in early cinema, but it is rather a huge pool, an ocean bed, a swampy marsh or a limpid bay in which spectators experience a sense of being engulfed and dragged toward the waterfall of perception, or getting sucked into a whirlpool of emotion.

Immersivity has become a distinctive trait of the theatrical experience, which is forced to resort to new and enhanced solutions in order to contend with the impoverishment of the viewing experience caused by the process of relocation.

Relocation is causing the film experience to 'migrate' from one place to another, from its 'motherland' to new frontiers: a film can be watched in various places, in various individual and interpersonal contexts, and by means of various devices and screens (Casetti 2009, 62). This process does not simply concern the locations where films are viewed, nor the aesthetic or textual characteristics of films, nor the technical platforms of film delivery. Rather, it consists in the 'displacement' of the experience: a corpus of social and cultural needs, rules and pleasures that arose with the advent of cinema, developed as it evolved, and that are still present today in the 'relocated cinematic practices.' The main response of theatrical cinema to this scenario has been to search for new and enhanced forms of immersivity, refining its technical means and special effects in order to provide the spectator with both the impression of really being in the space of the fictional events depicted and an intense sensorial experience (via special effects, CGI, 3D, etc.).

Inevitably, the appearance of water on the screen gives rise to a whole series of possible inherent meanings. Since ancient times, the element of water has represented the 'great mother,' the substance that generates life on Earth. For Thales of Miletus, water is the origin of every vital principle, the source from which every living thing stems. According to Empedocles, all matter is comprised of four 'roots,' or elements. Knowledge originates in the encounter between an element within a human being and the same element outside of him/her: "for with earth do we see earth, with water water, with air bright air, with fire consuming fire, with Love do we see Love, Strife with dread Strife" (Empedocles, B 109 – see: http://plato.stanford.edu/entries/empedocles/). This idea is further developed by Aristotle to assert that the elements all arise from the interplay between the archetypal properties of hotness and coldness, dryness and wetness. Water is wet and cold and its qualities are fluidity and flexibility, the ability to adapt to external conditions (Aristotle 1998). As a consequence, water tends to be expansive, since it can fill spaces in its surroundings. In De Anima, Aristotle divides the senses into two categories: the senses of touch and taste that apprehend their objects by direct contact, and the 'distance-senses' – sight, hearing and smell – that approach their objects without immediate contact. The objects of sight are perceptible through media. The medium of sight is composed of simple elements, i.e. air and water. The power of sight must be realised in an organ made of a transparent liquid, in order that it be receptive of colour and light (Aristotle 1993, III: 1).

The figures of Poseidon/Neptune, Aphrodite/Venus, Narcissus and Ulysses testify that water has a crucial role in both Greek and Latin mythology. It is also thus in the Jewish and Christian tradition. In Genesis, "Darkness covered the deep and the Spirit of God hovered over the water" (Genesis 1: 2). The flood

extended over all the Earth from which Noah and his family and livestock were saved in the ark (Genesis 6–9). In the New Testament, water is a means of purification, a factor of regeneration. The Baptism of Christ in the Jordan symbolises purification and new birth (John 1: 29–33). Blood and water flow from his side during the Crucifixion (John 19: 34). In any religious context, waters disintegrate and dissolve forms, and wash away sins; they are at once purifying and regenerating. Purification and contamination, life and death, transparency and opacity… These ambiguous roots of the meaning of water in Western culture are reflected in literature, figurative art and, of course, in cinema. On the one hand, in a continuation of the 'attractive' tendency of early cinema, water is a means of engendering physical involvement by astonishing the spectator; on the other hand, the symbolic meanings of water implicitly emerge on the surface of the screen, to the extent that even in the most intellectual and symbolised cinematographic uses of water – consider, for example, Tarkovsky's works – the perceptual and tangible consistency of images and sounds and their symbolic meanings are mutually embodied.

As cinema has developed, it has aspired to being more than a mere attraction and, accordingly, it has focused on the metaphorical and symbolic meanings of water. For example, in Terje Vigen (Victor Sjöström, 1916), the sea is used as a backdrop to the main character's rage against the evil fate. In Mother (Vsevolod I. Pudovkin, 1926), the happiness of the prisoner for his imminent freedom is expressed by the non-diegetic inserts of the fresh waters of a stream. Filmmakers quickly recognised the expressive potential of water and allowed it to permeate the language of film: just consider the bobbing, wave-like opening titles of Emak Bakia (Man Ray, 1926) or the fading images of Étoile de mer (Man Ray, 1928). In the 1920s and 1930s, French directors (e.g. L'Herbier, Epstein and Vigo) profusely used the visual and dramaturgic richness of water and created solutions inspired by its dynamic properties, e.g. flou, superimposition, filters, and out-of-focus, marking "a passage from a mechanics of solids to a mechanics of fluids… [Water] provided better conditions to pass from the concrete to the abstract, a greater possibility of communicating an irreversible duration to movements, independently of their figurative characters, a more certain power of extracting movement from the thing moved" (Deleuze 1986, 43). In Ménilmontant (Dimitri Kirsanov, 1924), the shocked state of the protagonist is visualised through the superimposition of her face and the streaming river water into which she is contemplating throwing herself to commit suicide (like a modern Ophelia). In L'Atalante (Jean Vigo, 1934), the slow flow of the river on which the boat floats is a metaphor of life and love, until the scene in which Jean dives into the river and has a vision of his love Juliette. The series of Jean Epstein's documentary films set in coastal Britain is particularly significant in order to explain the concept of

'paysage-acteur,' namely that nature on screen has the same role as actors in dramatic films and is subject to the same detailed critical analysis (see Epstein 1974–75). In Le Tempestaire (Jean Epstein, 1947), "Epstein was able to express it from the inside, the viewer is absorbed by it. The heart of the storm is suggested by a sense of entrapment and engulfment. The filmmaker uses the cliffs to create dives into the body of water" (Dulac 2008). [Fig. 1.]

Water in Contemporary Narrative Cinema

In the wake of this centuries-old tradition, contemporary cinema exploited the capability of water, visually and aurally, to give a palpable form to human desires and dreams. Water is often represented or evoked in film as a substance that submerges something that is destined to re-emerge. Through its semantic fluidity, cinema lets the unconscious drift before the eyes of the spectators and infiltrate their limpid gaze. A psychological malaise affects the main characters and has to be washed away with clean water.

For example, in the finale of The Hours (Stephen Daldry, 2004), Virginia Woolf fills her pockets with stones and commits suicide by allowing the current of the river to engulf her. In The Truman Show (Peter Weir, 1998), to prevent Truman from discovering reality, the show's creators stage his father's death in a storm while on a fishing trip and instil Truman with a fear of water. Water surrounds the city where Truman lives, Sea Haven, a sort of postmodern Atlantis submerged in the television reality. The separation of a son from his father is represented in the muddy waters of a sewer even in animation films, e.g. Ratatouille (Brad Bird, 2007). In Minority Report (Steven Spielberg, 2002), John Anderton's son has been kidnapped in a crowded swimming pool. In this film, water receptacles form a recurring motif, e.g. the warm pool in which 'precogs' are immersed evokes the pre-birth situation, and the icy water of a bathtub into which Anderton immerses himself in an attempt to keep a pack of menacing spider-like robots off his scent. In Titanic (James Cameron, 1997), after many vicissitudes during the foundering of the steamship, Jack Dawson dies in the icy water of the Atlantic Ocean. Water in a pool conducts electricity and kills a child in Syriana (Stephen Gaghan, 2005). In The Prestige (Christopher Nolan, 2006), Robert Angier's clones drown in water after each 'transportation' trick. In What Lies Beneath (Robert Zemeckis, 2000), water conceals the traces of criminal acts and compromising pieces of evidence, which are inevitably destined to emerge. Fear follows a new Acherons – the river of pain in Greek mythology – in Cape Fear (Martin Scorsese, 1991), The River Wild (Curtis Hanson, 1994), and Insomnia (Christopher Nolan, 2002).

Water in malicious and mysterious guise submerges the cinematic screen in science fiction films like Sphere (Barry Levinson, 1998). The destructive power of oceans swamp mankind in catastrophic films like Deep Impact (Mimi Leder, 1998), The Perfect Storm (Wolfgang Petersen, 2000) and 2012 (Roland Emmerich, 2009). The endless expanse of the sea isolates humans as in Cast Away (Robert Zemeckis, 2000), or generates new Ulysses, new sirens, new Jonahs, new Noahs, as in Waterworld (Kevin Reynolds, 1995), Master & Commander (Peter Weir, 2003), Lady in the Water (M. Night Shyamalan, 2006) and Big Fish (Tim Burton, 2003). [Fig. 2.]

Dozens of other examples from the last fifteen years can be cited. And, of course, this tendency goes beyond the borders of Hollywood. In the poetic finale of The Piano (Jane Campion, 1993), as we hear Ada's mental voice, we see her body floating above her piano lying in the seabed. "There is a silence where hath been no sound," she says quoting Thomas Hood's poem Silence, "There is a silence where no sound may be. In the cold grave, under the deep deep sea." In Atonement (Joe Wright, 2007), the bodies of the characters interact with water of many different kinds, which can be considered the very vital principle of the plot: the fountain into which Cecilia jumps to retrieve the fragments of the broken vase, the basin in which Briony pretends to drown in order to be rescued by Robbie, and the water that floods the subway station used as a refuge and kills Cecilia. Water takes on intellectual meanings in The Wild Blue Yonder (Werner Herzog, 2005), in which underwater shots made under the ice of the South Pole are presented as if showing the liquid atmosphere of the alien water planet. Here water is the domain of the stranger, the mutable incarnation of ungraspable meanings, for the mind rather than for the senses. In The Sea Inside (Alejandro Amenábar, 2004), Ramón Sampedro's quadriplegia is caused by a dive from a rock in the Mediterranean Sea gone wrong. The scene of the accident returns in a flashback as the spectator experiences the interplay between the physical trauma and its psychological consequences.

In all these films and many others, water is a substance that particularly lends itself to the representation of nightmares, hallucinations, depression and trauma, an unusual place of concealment and refuge, an element that can wash away sin, or from which sin re-emerges. Water is strategically used as a substance capable of marking the passage from one psychological condition to another, and of 'hosting' a crucial event, e.g. loss, trauma, separation, or death. Cinematic water is an elusive fluid that stirs the innermost human drives and pours them forth to quench their thirst for fancy and aspiration, but it can also swallow them in a whirlpool of their fears. Troubles pass under the bridge of cinema and, nonetheless, as water appears on the screen, something menacing

always lies in ambush – a sea monster, an oppressive past, a looming catastrophe, a tsunami. Not always does the river reach the vast horizon of the ocean and debouch the troubles that it bears along with it. This is particularly clear in science-fiction and horror movies, in which obscure forces and unforeseeable but imminent dangers come from deep water. From Jaws (Steven Spielberg, 1975) onward, cinema has used water to give substance to ghosts in the unconscious, an abyss that is mental rather that physical.

Dreams of Water

In Freudian psychoanalysis, the presence of water in dreams refers to the pre-utero state: "A large number of dreams, which are frequently full of anxiety, and whose content often involves the traversing of narrow spaces or staying long in the water, are based upon phantasies concerning the intra-uterine life, the sojourn in the mother's womb, and the act of birth" (Freud 1913, 250). Immersion in water also means birth: "Dreams of this sort are parturition dreams; their interpretation is effected by reversing the fact recorded in the manifest dream-content; thus, instead of 'flinging oneself into the water,' read 'coming out of the water' – that is, 'being born'" (Freud 1913, 250). Water is an insidious challenge for the senses. In *Phaedo,* Plato pointed out that a straight stick put in water appears bent (Plato 1993, 66a). The problem is to recognise and distinguish reality from the distorted images of what is not reality. And as Freud himself remembers, referring to Aristotle, "the best interpreter of dreams is he who can best grasp similarities. For dream-pictures, like pictures in water, are disfigured by the motion (of the water), so that he hits the target best who is able to recognise the true picture in the distorted one" (Freud 1913, 71).

As Carl G. Jung states in *The Archetypes and the Collective Unconscious*, in dreams and fantasies the sea or any large expanse of water is the commonest symbol for the unconscious (Jung 1959, 18), the "deep valley of the psyche" (Jung 1959, 17–18). The way of the soul in search of something or someone that has been lost "leads to the water, to the dark mirror that reposes at its bottom" (Jung 1959, 17); "the treasure lies in the depths of the water" (Jung 1959, 24). Nonetheless, "this water is no figure of speech, but a living symbol of the dark psyche" (Jung 1959, 17). The *living* nature of the symbol of water suggested by Jung allows us to clarify that the use of water in cinema – to be conceived as the concrete and perceivable projection of an inner projection of the psyche – is not merely as a film setting, nor only an aesthetic solution to express the internal state of the character. Water is a substance capable of

directly communicating symbols and meanings to the spectator, reducing the separation between the fictional space *on* the screen and the psychic space *in front* of the screen. In the films cited – and in many others –, as water appears on the surface of the cinematic screen, its deep meanings loom up, with no recourse, on the part of the spectator, to cultural background or encyclopedic knowledge, nor to mental processes of inference and interpretation.

Inspired by both Jungian archetypes and his interest in alchemy, Gaston Bachelard pointed out in his study on the 'imaginary waters' in poetry and literature that water ranges from the clear, slow moving, innocent and transparent river, that is related to the natural beauty of a young naked woman, innocent and unmysterious (Bachelard 1983, 33), to the deep, 'heavy' and running waters that symbolise the passing of time and death (Bachelard 1983, 46). Bachelard argued that human imagination does not draw on interpretation, but rather it is supported by "direct images of matter" (Bachelard 1983, 8), images in which "the form is deeply sunk in a substance" (Bachelard 1994, ix). Daydreaming (*rêverie*) sends "waves" of the unreal into reality and allows the daydreamer to reach the sleeping waters within themselves. The sensorial and sensuous experience of matter, memory and imagination find expression in poetic imagery based on water: "A poet who begins with a *mirror* must end with the *water of a fountain* if he wants to present a *complete poetic experience*" (Bachelard 1983, 21–22). This experience takes place in physical spaces in which human beings dwell and that themselves influence human memories, feelings and thoughts. Inner and outer space – the mind and the world – are reciprocally implicated (Bachelard 1994, 201). If we include the film-theatre in the space of poetic experience, we may approach the water-based film experience as an immersion of the material imagination.

In approaching the film experience, pre-cognitive and pre-linguistic 'knowledge' has a crucial role. Every spectator has a primordial sense of liquidity or fluidity and has an (unconscious) memory of the in-utero state. We instinctively associate water and drinkable fluids in general with the act of swallowing or with the state of being thirsty; we contrast the solidity of our bodies to the liquidity of water, our opacity with its transparency, our stillness with its flowing, and, though we recognise a common substance of which both we and the world are made, we involuntarily associate the qualities of warmth or cold, fluidity or muddiness, with human expressive states, like relaxation or annoyance, safety or danger, calmness or impetuosity. Before any deliberate inferences are made, the spectators explore the 'surface' of the screen, with no recourse to cultural background or cognitive activity. Only after this 'immediate' approach to the expressive forces of film images do spectators dive into the depths and call on their socio-cultural knowledge and background skills in order to interpret the meaning.

Enwaterment

Cinema cannot avoid the tendency to use the concreteness and symbolism of water for its immersive purposes. The film experience is the elective situation in which meaning can be directly communicated and experienced by the spectator. The use of water and its properties in the construction of the film experience may be considered as a form of Bachelardian 'materialising imagination,' or a Jungian 'living symbol' that offers its symbolic meaning as something to be experienced, rather than and prior to being understood and interiorised. Cinema literally and metaphorically seeks to construct a 'water-based' environment, a sharable site of experience in which the spectator can feel fully involved. This result is achieved by the extension of the expressive properties of water outside the fictional space of the screen. In this sense, the cinematic screen can be ideally thought of as a surface lapped by the gentle rippling of the waves, broken by the violence of the storm, flooded by deep seas, and the film-theatre as a vessel that sails the oceans, a canoe launched on the rapids, a crowded submarine, or a diving suit. In this environment that is perceived and experienced as unitary and homogeneous, different waters merge, permeating and infiltrating the psychological space of the experience, providing immersive and intense opportunities for involvement. The film has a 'liquid skin' that is perceived by the spectator haptically (Marks 2000; 2002). In the films cited above, water is a stylistic solution capable of stimulating engagement on a number of levels, from the intensification of visual and aural perception to the enhancement of synæsthetic perception. The narrative role of water is functional to the eliciting of emotions and the cognitive process of attribution of meaning. Throughout this composite process of involvement, spectators experience a sense of immersion as if they had been placed in the space of representation.

The point is that water is not only a representational substance that effectively visualises and symbolises the characters' psychic condition, but also a substance in which the film characters' bodies are immersed or drown together with their troubles. The fluid properties of water find an expressive cinematic 'translation' in the choice of precise technical and stylistic solutions with which narrative mainstream contemporary cinema both physically and psychically engages the spectator in a 'water-based relationship.' In the remainder of this essay, I shall reflect on the connection between the expressive role of water and its ability to provide cinematic experiences of immersion and drowning for the spectator. As examples of this, I briefly analyse some successful fictional American films, in particular *A. I. – Artificial Intelligence* (Steven Spielberg, 2001) and *Ray* (Taylor Hackford, 2004).

Suspension of Perception

Enwaterment specifically concerns aural and visual activity that is proper to the film experience. In *A. I.*, a group of children are playing beside a swimming pool and one of them tries to hurt the 'mecha' David with a knife to see if he can feel physical pain. Once pinched, David feels pain and, overtaken by fear, clutches at his human 'stepbrother' Martin and plunges them both into the swimming pool. Alerted by Martin's mother's scream for help, three men dive into the pool and free Martin from David's hold and rescue him from drowning. Nobody cares about David, who remains motionless at the bottom of the swimming pool (being a 'mecha,' he does not actually breathe). David's fear and disorientation are rendered with an effective point-of-view construction. In one type of shot he is shown staring at the top corner of the swimming pool, with a stunned expression and with open arms – as if in an unrequited embrace. The camera slowly approaches him, up to a close-up. The relative shot from the bottom of the swimming pool shows what David sees: Martin's unmoving feet just under the surface and the people trying to resuscitate him through the surface. These latter figures are distorted by the fluid, irregular movement of the water. The distortion of the perceptual world through the surface of water directly represents the disturbance of a psychological perspective and of social relationships. Mechas and humans inevitably live in different conditions and they cannot find mutual integration. The water surface acts as a sight-filter that offers a view into an altered, faraway and hostile world. This ineradicable separation is expressed through a different point-of-view that marks a difference in both social and ontological positions. The interesting fact is that David's perception is not distorted by a psychic or imaginative alteration, but rather by a 'natural' filter that *enwaters* his mental and emotional state. [Fig. 3.]

In this sequence, it is not only the optical perspective that is altered. David's immersion in the water also distorts aural perception. Human voices coming from the other side of the water surface are muffled, every movement produces an echoed noise, two curt splashes break the surface as men dive, bubbles envelop their bodies and a hollow and ever louder sound fills the scene… The spectator is aligned to David's 'point-of-hear' and each audible element is 'made' of water, with the effect of enhancing the watery nature of his perceptual experience. A liquid substance, with particular audible properties, lends an emotional charge to the movement.

Another good example of aural *enwaterment* is in the intense Normandy landings scene in *Saving Private Ryan* (Steven Spielberg, 1998): captain John Miller falls into the sea and witnesses the dramatic deaths of his men. The bullets of the German defence force cross the water and clouds of blood pump

out of stricken Allied soldiers, who are dragged towards the seabed by the weight of their weapons. As he emerges and reaches the foreshore, the muffled sound enables spectators to experience the temporary suspension of his perception and his state of shock. Here too, it is interesting to note that water continues to affect captain Miller's perceptions even once his body is out of it.

In fact, the most 'aquatic' shot of the *A. I.* scene described above does not take place in the swimming pool, but on its edge. Before David and Martin fall into the pool, their mother turns her face, in response to Martin's cry for help. [Fig. 4.] Such a movement can be described as 'fluid,' a slowed-down and softened movement. With no manipulation of time, a slow-motion effect is obtained with a mirrored-parabolic movement of the camera with respect to the movement of the face and, at the same time, with a typical, cushioned, underwater sound. The spectator is already immersed in a liquid environment before any characters' bodies have plunged into the water: 'aquatic' modes of perception are not always achieved in water.

Feet in the Water

Scenes in which a character's body is completely surrounded by water help to illuminate how water can constitute the 'bodily environment' of the film experience, and how the spectators can experience the perceivable qualities of water. *Enwaterment* concerns the body and its entire sensoriality. "Diving into water, for example, or sinking into a bath, we are not only in the realm of the audiovisual sensorium; *all* our senses, in fact all of our body, is encapsulated, surrounded. In that sense, it is a *haptic* experience, not merely an optical one" (Holmberg 2003, 132). This sensation arises as a physiological reaction, before being interpreted in a narrative logic. The spectators' skin synæsthetically comes into contact with the water and they feel as if they were fully immersed in the film. Drowning scenes especially arouse spectators' sensory-motor responses, like breathlessness and a sense of choking. Spectators may actually hold their breath, and even feel as if they are suffocating. This happens in the swimming pool scene in *A. I.*, as, for example, in one of the final scenes of *The Prestige*, in which Alfred Borden tries in vain to rescue Robert Angier's clone from drowning; or Truman's sailing toward freedom in *The Truman Show*; or the race against time in *Titanic*, emotionally intensified by the progressive rising of the ocean water that floods the steamship's various rooms and passageways. It is as if water floods into the film-theatre and progressively submerges the spectators.

In this regard, a very interesting case is the presence of water in *Ray*. In this film, the protagonist's blindness accentuates spectators' tactile awareness.

Moreover, the spectator can share Ray's mental visions and see the hallucinations and nightmares caused by his psychological illness and drug addiction. There are five water-based fragments in the film. The first two depict Ray Charles's hallucinations. We first *see* Ray performing a tactile activity (he is packing his suitcase, he has been kissed and wipes his lips). Then we *hear* the noise of water. Only at this point does a close-up that is both audio and visual allow us to *see and hear* Ray's fingertips exploring the wet clothes, until he encounters a lifeless foreign body. Ray encounters the human limbs of a child (hands touch hands…). He is horrified and abruptly withdraws his hands and stumbles backward, and the spectators physiologically mirror his reaction by starting in fear in their seats. The synæsthetic strategy of film puts us in Ray's hands, so that the spectator experiences his sensory-motor activity. The spectators' physical body remains still 'in front of' the screen, but they instinctively 'simulate' actions and movements, through a form of physiological sensory-motor mirroring. The second hallucination is constructed with the same structure, but in this case Ray's feet are shown immersed in the water; he bends over the floor, and his hands encounter George's dead foot; he leaps up and stumbles backward. [Fig. 5.]

Here water is the most functional solution for expressing the trauma of the characters. The property of water that best fulfils this function is depth. Both hallucination sequences are characterised by the contrast between the shallow water that fills small recipients (the suitcase) or that covers wide surfaces (the floor) and the profound depth of his troubles. Ray's hallucinations lie in shallow water, but they plunge into the deep darkness of his soul. Both his body, and, synæsthetically, the spectator's body, are only partially immersed in the water, but both Ray's and the spectator's sensorial, cognitive and emotional experiential frameworks are entirely immersed in the liquid substance that infiltrates the past and pushes it to the surface. During his rehabilitation therapy, after a conversation with the doctor, Ray has other hallucinations in which he accesses his past by plunging into the tub. He goes into himself *in depth* to resolve the sense of guilt that haunts him. As he decides to face the present (he is addicted to heroin) by facing up to his past, he breaks the water's surface. Cinema conveys the psychological progress/regress dynamic with a deep/surface dynamic. [Figs. 6–7.]

Narrative Flows

Immersion and drowning are often strategically used at particular turning points of the plot (prologue/epilogue, climax, finale, etc.) and have a crucial role in narrative development. In *What Lies Beneath* (Robert Zemeckis, 2000), a female face appears first as a floating corpse in the dense, murky surface of the

lake, while later it is mysteriously reflected in the transparent and reflective (though menacing) water in the bathtub. The submerged crimes committed by Norman Spencer progressively emerge. His wife Claire uncovers the facts and then Norman's attempts on her life by letting her drown in the bathtub after having paralysed her. Claire fights against her husband, their truck veers off the bridge and plunges into the lake, where the dead body of Norman's previous victim drags him down. The body of his shameful past (the adultery and the homicide) comes back to life to take revenge. A range of depths and densities are used with a precise narrative function.

In *I, Robot* (Alex Proyas, 2004), troubling past events surface in Del Spooner's nightmares caused by his survivor's guilt: after a car accident, he was rescued by a robot instead of a little girl, who drowns in the water-filled vehicle. This painful precedent returns various times during the plot and progressively reveals Spooner's trouble and the reason for his distrust of robots. Moreover, the underwater style of the accident scene is used as a graphic style for the opening credits. This solution both anticipates the rest of the film and, in a way, imprints it with the substance of water. Also, in the opening credits of *The New World* (Terrence Malik, 2005), the network of canals visually evokes the spread of colonisation. In the first scene, the pleasure with which the bodies of the natives bathe in clear water is contrasted to the violence with which the huge English ships sail the seas, announcing the imminent transition from a 'primitive' state in harmony with the natural environment to the 'civilisation' that imposes the domination and the violation of the landscape.

Usually, water offers a solution to signal the passage to another temporal framework of the events, e.g. a cross-fade before a flashback. In *The Truman Show* – another film which is sprinkled with references to water throughout (the sea that killed his father, the ditch that surrounds his town and his life, the only way for freedom…) – the flashback to Truman's college years begins with eddying water, as when the surface is broken by a stone, signifying a plunge into the past. This solution imitates the cross-fade and superimposition, typical aquatic formal solutions that visualise the idea of the merging of space and time, the soft and liquid transition from one place to another, from one time to another, from one state of things to another, the echo of the past in the present and vice-versa.

In the two sequences from *Ray* analysed above, water is initially kept off-screen. The passage from reality to the hallucination sequences is, as it were, *en abyme*, with no recourse to cross-fade, or perceptual alteration, nor any explicit signs of narrative cuts or a standard solution for signalling such a change. This stylistic choice aims to surprise the spectators at the moment when water appears on screen. In other water-based fragments of the film, we witness the

emersion of the trauma from his painful past experience. In Ray's nightmares, the spectator finally comprehends the cause of his crisis, and once again water is a very effective stylistic solution for representing this immersion/emersion dynamic. During the medication treatment, Ray has a nightmare in which the water becomes blood and the whole world is transformed by solarised photography and a stormy montage. Blood-coloured water leaks from the tub onto the camera lens, that is, onto the screen. Waters of the past overflow and merge with waters of the present, flowing toward the sea and healing old wounds.

Cutting Surfaces

The surface of the water inevitably refers to the surface of the cinematic screen. As water appears on the screen, one surface cuts another. Water makes the screen a fluid and interconnecting threshold between two places, between here and there, between present and past, conscious and unconscious, waking and sleeping, life and death. Just as the screen both separates and brings together the fictional and the actual world, water is also a plane of separation and connection between two different but not incompatible worlds.

When the water surface meets the screen at right angles (i.e. the frame is split perpendicularly by the edge of the water), this offers a specific point of view, e.g. the 'awash shots' in *Jaws* (Steven Spielberg, 1975). By embodying the perceptual frame of a shark, the camera immediately creates a high level of suspense that is experienced bodily by the spectator. This stylistic solution is, in fact, a particular type of split screen, or even a special kind of internal editing. The splitting acts both at a visual level and at an ontological level, dividing the world into the human and the non-human (e.g. monsters, animals, robots and replicants).

The line of the water surface may also intersect the body. In Ray's nightmares, only the limbs of his brother George are visible. In the flashback that makes the spectators aware of Ray's past trauma, in fact, a close-up shows George's feet slipping and his falling into a rinse tub. While he is drowning, the camera shows his tumbling legs, until they stop, in front of Ray's shocked gaze. George's body is a divided body, split into two worlds by the water in the tub. The surface is a space of appearing and disappearing, through which something emerges and something is immersed. Water cuts and sutures, gives life and kills.

In *A. I.* as well, the surface explicitly splits the body with no actual cut: we see the legs and the feet of Martin, David's stepbrother, this time returning from motionlessness to movement, from death to life. The two last shots of this sequence are particularly important in order to understand another aspect of

enwaterment. In the first shot, David sees Martin brought away by his mother and his father. Their figures, deformed by the movement of water, move away until they disappear from David's field of view. David is eventually left alone. The image of their absence continues to fluctuate. The second shot is a dolly out that shows David at the bottom of the swimming pool and gradually moves upward, until he is a small and motionless body in the middle of the water. Thanks to the immersion in the water of the point-of-view structure that shows the observing subject and the 'subjectified' (altered) observed object, the spectator experiences both the character's inner state and his or her own state, his or her bodily position in the psychological space of the film experience. This point-of-view dynamic makes the spectator aware of two things: (s)he sees the world from a new, underwater and *enwatered* point-of-view, and (s)he sees the place and the body that (s)he occupied before. As Vivian Sobchack would argue in the wake of Maurice Merleau-Ponty's notion of *reversibility* (Merleau-Ponty 1968, 139), the spectator is both a *seeing* and *seen* subject (Sobchack 1992, 103–104), involved in both the act of perceiving and the act of perceiving his or her perceiving. More than mere physiological reflex responses to sensorial stimuli, and far from being a metaphor of the screen as a Narcissistic mirror, cinema uses watery modes of expression and encourages watery modes of perception, with the effect of revealing its inherent *reflexive* nature.

In brief, *enwaterment* is a process of constructing and organising water-based film experience, which aims to merge the tendency of film to express sensoriality and the spectators' tendency to feel the sense of film directly with their senses. The transparency of water evokes the act of seeing, streaming water suggests the motion of images, and the surface of water replicates the surface of the screen. Many stylistic and formal modes of representation – e.g. cross-fade, slow motion, split screen and flashback – are typically 'aquatic,' since they involve the visual and aural concretisation of the dynamic properties of water. The fluid's movement accelerates or decelerates bodily motion, aquatic photography makes the characters' bodies 'dense' or 'diluted,' while underwater sounds and 'awash' shots produce a liquid film style that calls for a liquid spectatorship. Haptic perception is enhanced by immersion, physiological reactions are stimulated by the representation of drowning bodies, and the characters evolve through narrative points that are imbued with water. This is as true in the water as out of it: this enwaterment is not merely a way of experiencing the film in which water is a subject or a setting, but it is also a general attitude of the spectator, who, at least in the most effective cases, comprehends and internalises even the symbolic substance of film by experiencing it in a bodily, immediate, empathetic and reflexive form.

References

Aristotle. 1993. *De Anima*, (trans. D. W. Hamlyn). Oxford: Clarendon Press.
Aristotle. 1998. *Aristotle's Metaphysics*, (trans. H. Lawson-Tancred). New York: Penguin.
Bachelard, Gaston. 1983 [1942]. *Water and Dreams. An Essay on the Imagination of Matter*. Dallas: Pegasus Foundation.
Bachelard, Gaston. 1994 [1958]. *The Poetics of Space*. Boston: Beacon Press.
Casetti, Francesco. 2009. The Film Experience. *Screen* vol. 50 no. 1: 56–66.
Deleuze, Gilles. 1986 [1983]. *Cinema I: The Movement Image*. London: Athlone.
Dulac, Elodie. 2008. Une seconde nature. *Cadrage*.
Epstein, Jean. 1974–1975. *Écrits sur le cinéma*, 2 vols. Paris: Seghers.
Freud, Sigmund. 1913 [1900]. *The Interpretation of Dreams*, 3rd ed. New York: Macmillan.
Jung, Carl G. 1959 [1934–1954]. *The Collected Works*, vol. 9, part 1, The Archetypes and the Collective Unconscious. London: Routledge & Kegan Paul.
Marks, Laura U. 2000. *The Skin of Film: Intercultural Cinema, Embodiment, and the Senses*. Durham: Duke University Press.
Marks, Laura U. 2002. *Touch: Sensuous Theory and Multisensory Media*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.
Merleau-Ponty, Maurice. 1968 [1964]. *The Visible and the Invisible*, Evanston: Northwestern University Press.
Plato. 1993. *Phaedo*, (trans. David Gallop). Oxford,- New York: Oxford University Press.
Sargeant, Amy. 2005. Celluloid and Water. In *I cinque sensi del cinema*, eds. Alice Autelitano, Veronica Innocenti and Valentina Re, 429–433. Udine: Forum.
Sobchack, Vivian. 1992. *The Address of the Eye. A Phenomenology of the Film Experience*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.

List of Figures

Figure 1. *Ménilmontant* (Dimitri Kirsanov, 1924); *L'Atalante* (Jean Vigo, 1934); *Le Tempestaire* (Jean Epstein, 1947).

Figure 2. Drowning and immersive scenes in contemporary cinema: *Atonement* (Joe Wright, 2007), *Minority Report* (Steven Spielberg, 2002), *Syriana* (Stephen Gaghan, 2005), *What Lies Beneath* (Robert Zemeckis, 2000), *Saving Private Ryan* (Steven Spielberg, 1998), *Sphere* (Barry Levinson, 1998), *The Truman Show* (Peter Weir, 1998), *The Hours* (Stephen Daldry, 2004), *The Sea Inside* (Alejandro Amenábar, 2004).

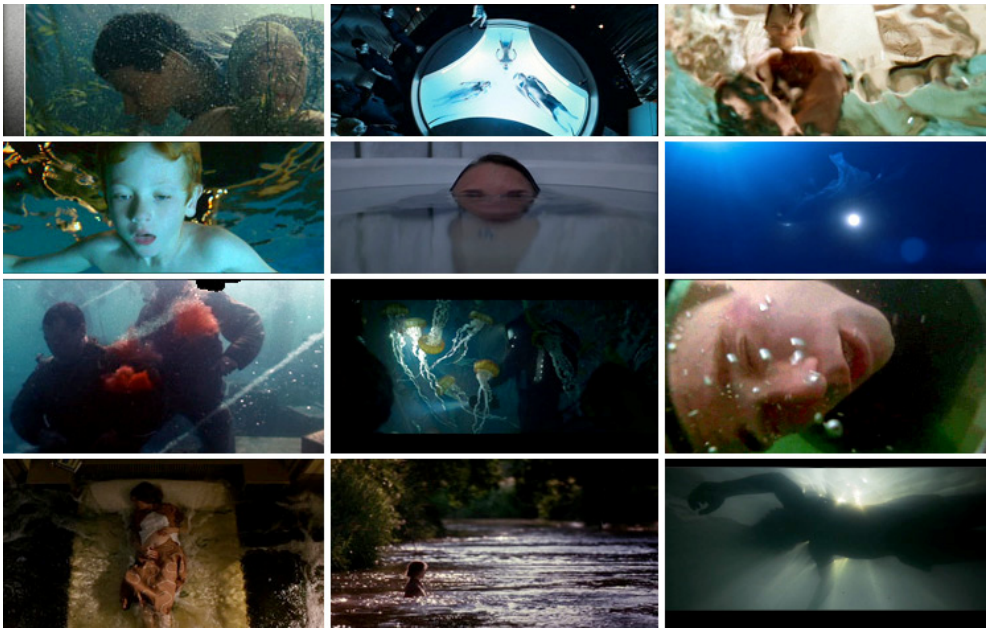


Figure 3. *A. I. – Artificial Intelligence* (Steven Spielberg, 2001).

Figure 4. Fluid camera movement in *A. I. – Artificial Intelligence* (Steven Spielberg, 2001).

Figure 5. *Ray* (Taylor Hackford, 2004).

Figures 6–7. Hallucinations and nightmares in *Ray* (Taylor Hackford, 2004).

ACTA UNIV. SAPIENTIAE, FILM AND MEDIA STUDIES, 5 (2012) 107–128

Surrogate Nature, Culture, Women – Inner Colonies. Postcolonial Readings of Contemporary Hungarian Films

Mónika Dánél
Eötvös Loránd University (Budapest)
E-mail: d.mona7@gmail.com

Abstract. The article examines a group of films which take place in Romania, in Transylvania: stories of murders, incest, self-jurisdiction are implanted into the geographically and culturally localised nature and they are represented as the nature of the respective culture. From the viewpoint of postcolonial theory, I examine the stereotypical image that these films transmit about the represented culture. From the angle of the chronotopes of geographical culture, postcolonialism itself becomes a problematic term, in this way I identify here a specific local version of the colonising logic. The colonial relationship between the own and the other is transformed into the foreignness, the otherness of the own, thus the Balkans are represented as Europe's inner colony, its Wild East. The arriving white man does not conquer a foreign virgin land, on the contrary, the homecoming male heroes make attempts to recapture the mother earth. However, the mothers, women are surrogate ones, raped or voluntary whores. If the female protagonist becomes a traveller, then this means transport: they are transported to the West, where their homeland becomes their stigma, and this empowers the Western males to hire them. I regard the term surrogate borrowed from Jacques Derrida – simultaneously bearing the duality of the organic and the foreign – as being suitable for grasping a special version of colonialism, proliferating nowadays, in which nature, culture and women respectively, localised in Romania, are represented as surrogates of foreign (male) conceptions.

> "*– She is of that kind. – Of what kind? – Of the 'Szépasszony' kind. – I don't understand. She is either of the evil type or a whore! – She is not a whore. The whore sleeps around. – Then why is she the evil type?*" (Dezső Zsigmond: *Witch Circle*. A male detective interrogates a local male inhabitant.)

In the Voice of the Native – Harshly

I start the present study with confessing my personal involvement: I come from the landscape, from the culture about which the films[1] I will discuss hereafter transmit images and make them transportable. I know its air, the taste of its foods. The critical tint of my paper (also) derives from this subjective position, from the sensitive viewpoint of the native. As every confession, mine is not devoid of stylisation either, on the other hand, it (re)produces the opposition of power between the coloniser and the colonised of colonial discourse. Still, I consider necessary to raise the topic of the native, as the films below pretend as if they had no knowledge whatsoever about the colonising gaze and, respectively, about its postcolonial criticism in film theory. I cannot see the trace of the presence of this viewpoint in Hungarian film criticism to such an extent that I formulate my statements on the soil of doubt, in the (discursive) wilderness. I will try not to lose sight of the fact that sensitivity and bias is blindness at the same time, this is why the reader should regard the tendency perceived by me and its problematic character as marks of crumbs scattered among the trees in the woods of a particular tale. Thus I examine in what way the ever increasing group of films can be regarded as stigmatising from the viewpoint of a given culture.[2] Being aware of the fact that the respective film "may be read differently by different audiences" (Stam and Spence 1983, 19), I do not wish to generalise, instead, my aim is to discuss the manner in which, as a Romanian, Transylvanian female spectator, I *cannot* regard these films as aesthetic products irrespective of culture and geography, about the manner in which their constitutedness from this view *cannot be separated* from the ideological expectation – foreign, at first sight, to the inherent mode of the artwork – referring to what kind of image these films make

1 In order of their appearance: Zoltán Kamondi: *The Alchemist and the Virgin* (*Az alkimista és a szűz*, 1998), Kornél Mundruczó: *Little Apocrypha No. 2* (*Kis Apokrif No. 2*, 2004), Róbert Pejó: *Dallas Pashamende* (2005), Zoltán Kamondi: *Dolina* (2006), Csaba Bollók: *Iszka's Journey* (*Iszka utazása*, 2007), Kornél Mundruczó: *Delta* (2008), Béla Paczolay: *Adventurers* (*Kalandorok*, 2008), Peter Strickland: *Katalin Varga* (*Varga Katalin balladája*, 2009), Zsigmond Dezső: *Witch Circle* (*Boszorkánykör*, 2009), Hajdú Szabolcs: *Bibliotheque Pascal* (2010). *Katalin Varga* is an exception so far as it was not produced in Hungary; it is a British–Romanian–Hungarian co-production created by the British Peter Strickland living in Hungary, with a Hungarian staff and Transylvanian actors.

2 In order to realise how efficiently cinematic representation makes transportable the historical image of a culture, it is sufficient to think of the Dracula automatism immediately popping up to the word 'Romania.' For the viewpoint of a historian, see the recent volume entitled *From Vlad the Impaler to Dracula the Vampire* by Neagu Djuvara (2011).

transportable about a given culture. Ever since the shifts of emphasis of cultural turn, the constitutedness of a film cannot be considered irrespective of its attitude to the represented culture and also to nature itself, viewed from the angle of cultural geography, emphatic since the 1970s. As according to cultural geography and, within, postcolonial geography, the represented nature is no longer some kind of *ab ovo* virgin land (I will return to this metaphor), but it is connected to cultures, it is a cultural carrier, and the other way round, it is the place of culture (see also Ryan 2004). On the other hand, *terrae incognitae* is accompanied by the association of some kind of (European) *imaginative geographies*. As Edward Said (1979) expounds in relation to orientalism: the East, as an imagined place, colonised by discourses, created through stories and stereotypes, will become the community illusion of Europe.

According to postcolonial criticism, in colonial identity formation "Europe constructed its self-image on the backs of its equally constructed Other – the 'savage,' the 'cannibal' – much as phallocentrism sees its self-flattering image in the mirror of woman defined as lack" (Stam and Spence 1983, 4). The fact that the term 'postcolonial' itself is Europe-centred is highlighted in David Chioni Moore's study, the author being of a Lithuanian origin (Moore 2011). It becomes evident from the very viewpoint of cultural geography that even the deconstructive, highly reflected terms can have a colonising effect if applied to a field with distinct mechanisms. The referred author analyses the Baltic and Soviet (power) relationship and points out the extrusion of the post-Soviet region from under the postcolonial term. Thus, even such generally accepted terms as 'postcolonialism' become problematic from the angle of chronotopes of geographical culture.[3] In my study, when I speak about *inner colonisation* from a postcolonial angle, I use the (universal) viewpoints of ideology criticism of this theory and, at the same time, I modify the use of the term in accordance with the territory and geographical culture examined by me. In my view, in the uneven opposition between Europe and the Balkans, in its construct in form of an

3 The Estonian–Finnish authoress Sofi Oksanen speaks about a similar place-boundedness in an interview in which she highlights that the trauma of the Gulag cannot be told in the language of the Holocaust trauma (cf. Oksanen 2011). In other words, the sounds according to which stories are bound to culture, land and geography, according to which one's mode of narration cannot be transposed to the other, are increasingly amplified, and this seems to be extending to the theoretical discourse as well. Magic realism, of Latin-American origin, or ethnofuturism, the term for the trend after postmodernism, of Estonian origin, spread nowadays in other Finno-Ugric cultures, in the Udmurt culture for instance, are concepts working in a similar way. In the digital age, the "spirit of the place" is simultaneously amplified and becomes an irrelevant viewpoint. (Foreign) stories can be located anywhere. And this is why the manner in which the surrogate culture, the surrogate geography is represented becomes relevant.

asymmetrical concept, the logic of colonisation prevails.[4] The Balkans appear as a virtually moving terrain in Europe's identity image: it is simultaneously its part and its other, its inner Wild East. On a smaller scale, restricting the terrain of asymmetrical concepts, in the self-definition of Hungarian culture, Romania (Transylvania) appears as the *other* of the Hungarian nation, as the cradle, the horrifying depository of atavistic or primitive, desired or lost, envied or rejected wild passions.[5] Whereas in the case of classical colonialism (and cinematic representations in which this view prevails), the conquest of a foreign territory, the colonisation of a foreign nation took place, in the phenomenon perceived by me an inner colonisation, self-colonisation can be detected, which can also be called *reterritorialisation* taking place in representation.[6] This is the very reason why, from among the several films transmitting images on Romania along similar stereotypes, here I examine those with a Hungarian reference.[7]

The films mentioned above do not form a homogeneous group, and though I will not analyse them exhaustively but only group them along their characteristics, I will try however to nuance their aesthetic differences along the questions how they position the spectator and, respectively, how the represented

4 On the asymmetrical concept as the mechanism of expropriating a general term [*Singularisierung*] and consequently, of excluding others from it, see Koselleck (1975).

5 In the Hungarian reception of the films examined by me, the metaphors of this relationship proliferate in an ironical or affirmative way. Here I only quote a sentence referring to *Iszka's Journey*: "There [in Transylvania] there still exists the quantity of suffering and despair sufficient for a likely art movie" (Földes 2007).

6 The relationship among Transylvania, Hungary and Romania becomes historically burdened right through geography, through where the territory of Transylvania belongs to. It is worth taking a look at the international press reaction of the films *Delta* and *Katalin Varga* also from this viewpoint. Not in one place downright geographical and cultural anomalies can be found in the articles. *The New York Times* speaks of the Hungarian Danube, the *Guardian* is compelled to publish a correction in connection with the premises of *Katalin Varga*, cf. "When the liveliest character in a movie is the heroine's pet turtle, you know you're in for some seriously stately filmmaking, and »Delta« does not disappoint. Set in a village in the edge of the Hungarian Danube, this visually demonstrative, emotionally constipated drama observes the fallout when a towheaded prodigal son (Felix Lajko) and his frail younger sister (Orsolya Tóth) decide to become better acquainted" (Catsoulis 2012); "The award-winning movie Katalin Varga was said below to have been filmed in Hungary. In reality it was filmed near the heart of Romania, in the Székely area of Transylvania (the fact that many inhabitants of the area in question are of Hungarian ancestry often gives rise to confusion)" (Bradshaw 2012).

7 Romania as a *surrogate country* is a much more widely spread phenomenon. Among others, the film entitled *Borat* (Larry Charles, 2006) is an outstanding example of *transportable representation*: the 'surrogate' enactors of the Kazakh village and its dwellers are a Romanian village and its dwellers; it was carried out in a stigmatising way, to such an extent that, after the presentation of the film, vehement dissatisfaction broke out both on the Romanian's and on the Kazakh's part.

world gets shape. Thus my questions are as follows: can the way of constitutedness of the artwork be distinguished from the postcolonial gaze, from cultural geography? Can a film which stigmatises a given culture be aesthetically evaluated? In the case of the two most problematic films from my viewpoints, the *Delta* and the *Katalin Varga*, the award nominations, the Hungarian and the international press reaction testify that it can. These films prove to be the carriers of exoticism transported to the western spectator,[8] of the horror that can be experienced in the relieving darkness of the auditorium, and through them Romania and Transylvania gain their faces as the spaces of rough wilderness as well as oriental magic, as the Wild East of Eastern Europe. In order to exemplify the divergence of the aesthetic and the culturally coded view (though it cannot be separated in this way), I mention here the moving of the boats in the film entitled *Delta*, which can equally be the "favourite part" of a recipient[9] through its aesthetic constitutedness and, at the same time, without contesting its beauty, the image sequence evoking the native attacks of colonising films in my reception. The boats are approaching threateningly, then we can see the silent, distancing motion of expressive faces. [Figs.1– 4.]

Nature and Culture – the Nature of Culture

The short film entitled *Little Apocrypha No. 2* (Kornél Mundruczó, 2004) is connected to the Hungarian culture only by the director's name and by Orsi Tóth acting the female character speaking Romanian with an accent. The scene is the place of mythical fishing: reeds and water; it is because of the language that we connect the landscape to a culture – we can see the "miracle story" of Romanian fishermen. Four years later a Hungarian-language story is embedded into "the same" nature, also directed by Kornél Mundruczó. In the film entitled *Delta*, linguistic nuances are within the Hungarian language this time (the uncle and the protagonist, Mihail speak different Hungarian accents), a Rou inscription on a ship, which we can see framed by a door window, alludes to the Romanian space (earlier we could see a cow in a structurally similar frame),

8 Mikhail Bakhtin writes about the opposition inherent in exoticism: "Exoticism presupposes a deliberate *opposition of what is alien to what is one's own*, the otherness of what is foreign is emphasized, savorized, as it were, and elaborately depicted against an implied background of one's own ordinary and familiar word" (Bakhtin 1981, 101). In colonialism this opposition turned into a structure of power.

9 "The dénouement can be surmised after the first half an hour of the film, however, the focus is not on the closure but rather on the overwhelming nature and, of course, on the ominous signs. My favourite part is when the boats move in the channel, accompanied by slow, grievous music" (Földes 2008).

and respectively, the sight of an onion-domed church also ejects the Hungarian-language story (as it does not belong to the orthodox cultural area). Thus, the landscape and its magic are given, in which stories can be placed, no matter in what language, and the landscape is forced to *bear it to term*, as if it had both a Romanian and a Hungarian face.[10] However, the female figure (Orsi Tóth) and the nature are common – and in representation they are identical.[11] Another kind of nature is presented in the film entitled *Katalin Varga* (Peter Strickland, 2009), but it fits into the above series of films so far as the spectacle of the mountains also holds the spectator spellbound. Nature is not a phantom background here either, but rather the fragrant and booming medium of happenings.[12] In it, the wild, natural, cultural prohibitions, events prior to law, such as self-jurisdiction, murders and incest/blood relation prior to society, overwriting the nature–culture opposition, come to life.[13] This is the very reason why they are effective, as the acultural events are placed into nature: delta, forest and mountains.[14] The laws of nature reign, and this could be seen

10 I borrow the term 'surrogate' from Jacques Derrida's interpretation. For *surrogate mother* as the figure of questioning ontological certainty, see Derrida (1993). The surrogate mother is simultaneously the structure of foreignness and organicity. The problematic character of these films can be grasped, in my view, along this duality: they represent foreign, general, stereotypical stories as organically belonging to a given culture and nature.

11 They were also identical in classical colonialism; with the conquest of the virgin land, the innocent black native was also forced to surrender. As for the connection between geography and female representation in the colonising gaze, see, for instance, Shohat (1991).

12 It is not accidental that the soundtrack technique evoking the acoustic universe of nature films was awarded with the Silver Bear prize at the 2009 biennial. Frogs, crickets, night bug buzzing sound like the authentic booming of the place, on the other hand, we can hear electronic sounds with the effect of creating tension as Katalin Varga's "inner voice" as she approaches the forest, as a tone "superimposed" upon the subjective perception of nature.

13 Cf.: "We know what function is fulfilled by the incest prohibition in primitive societies. By casting, so to speak, the sisters and daughters out of the consanguine group, and by assigning to them husbands coming from other groups, the prohibition creates bonds of alliance between these natural groups, the first ones which can be called social. The incest prohibition is thus the basis of human society; in a sense it *is* the society" (Lévi-Strauss 1976, 19).

14 As for the interpretation of the relationship between nature and culture, see Derrida's text fragment interpreting Lévi-Strauss: "In order to follow this movement in the text of Levi-Strauss, let me choose as one guiding thread among others the oppostion between nature and culture. In spite of all its rejuvenations and its disguises, this opposition is congenital to philosophy. It is even older than Plato. It is at least as old as the Sophists. Since the statement of the opposition – Physis/nomos, physis/techne [nature/culture, nature/art or making] – it has been passed on to us by a whole historical chain which opposes »nature« to the law, to education, to art, to technics – and also to liberty, to the arbitrary, to history, to

as universalism, that is, this could happen anywhere (though different places have different laws of nature) if a chronotopically (spatially and temporally) defined culture were forced to bear to term this aculturality.[15] However, these films culturally localise these wild acts, preceding cultural prohibition and out of law. And from here on, murder, incest and self-jurisdiction will appear as the *(universal) nature of a particular culture*. [Figs. 5–6.]

As the nature of a culture where it is a recurrent constant of representation that women are raped, thus they are turned into surrogate mothers, and where nature and culture are stigmatised by cinematic representation, female figures are stylised as surrogates of literary and cultural archetypes. Similar stereotypical constants in the films are as follows: pig screaming (*Delta*, *Katalin Varga*, *Witch Circle*, the first frame of *Borat* is a pigsty), horse running free, wild horse, riding on horseback (*Witch Circle*, *Bibliotheque Pascal*), aggressive male acted by Tibor Pálffy[16] (*Katalin Varga, Witch Circle, Bibliotheque Pascal*), dance in an inn (*Delta, Katalin Varga*), fire burning in nature (*Little Apocrypha No. 2*, *Delta, Katalin Varga*), and besides, love-making and murder.

society, to the mind, and so on. From the beginnings of his quest and from his first book*, The Elementary Structures of Kinship*, Levi-Strauss has felt at one and the same time the necessity of utilizing this opposition and the impossibility of making it acceptable. In the *Elementary Structures*, he begins from this axiom or definition: that belongs to nature which is *universal* and spontaneous, not depending on any particular culture or on any determinate norm. That belongs to culture, on the other hand, which depends on a system of *norms* regulating society and is therefore capable of *varying* from one social structure to another. These two definitions are of the traditional type. But, in the very first pages of the *Elementary Structures*, Levi-Strauss, who has begun to give these concepts an acceptable standing, encounters what he calls a *scandal,* that is to say, something which no longer tolerates the nature/culture opposition he has accepted and which seems to require at *one and the same time* the predicates of nature and those of culture. This scandal is the *incest-prohibition.* The incest-prohibition is universal; in this sense one could call it natural. But it is also a prohibition, a system of norms and interdicts; in this sense one could call it cultural." (Derrida 1978, 357.)

15 Further signifiers of the chronotopes of the two films: porridge flour with the inscription 'Mălai' can be seen, on the improvised shelf, on close-ups several times; Popol Vuh *On the way* the music composed for Werner Herzog's film entitled *Nosferatu* can also be heard in *Delta*, evoking the Dracula topic, although the use of the euro (the homecoming foreigner pays with it) and the name of the inn, Suez (rhyming to the film music Ingo Ludwig Frenzel's *Close to Suez*) tries to lift the story from the cultural landscape. The modern Katalin Varga, travelling on a horse cart, wearing a traditional dress, looks for 'sign' (and not for reception) for her mobile phone. Although her destination, Jádszereda is a non-existent settlement, Szereda however may have manifold references (Csíkszereda, Nyárádszereda), and the word 'iad' means hell in Romanian. Arriving at the village, on the cart, she starts singing the folk song *Aluszol-e te juhász* [*Do you sleep shepherd*].

16 Tibor Pálffy will get rid of the role of the aggressive male in *Dallas Pasahamende*, in this film he can give evidence of another side of his talent as "the village idiot."

At the same time, the cultural specificity, for instance, in the case of the name Katalin Varga, which could displace the image of the "bloody individual avenger" from the female Dracula claim, for the eponymous woman was a Transylvanian historical figure, is totally absent – there is no reference in the film in this respect. To be more precise, a certain Katalin Varga, in search of legal remedy for her individual injuries in Vienna, will later head the Romanian serfs against the Hungarian landowners and becomes the advocate of the 1840 miners' movement, deserving the address "Our Lady" (Doamna Noastră) (cf. Tóth 1951 and Kiss 1980). A literary parallel can be found also in this case (Heinrich von Kleist: *Michael Kohlhaas*), just as in the figure of Katalin Varga colonised as the Transylvanian Tess. I do not miss the realism of a historical figure; I consider that the film moves the female trauma created in the nineteenth century, and writes it further in the context of another culture in the twentieth century and, disregarding the cultural and local co-efficients of the personal name and of history, it presents it as the own of Transylvanian culture.[17] The film stages right the opposite of what the historical name is connected to: Katalin Varga as a Hungarian supported the Romanian serfs, whereas in the film she is murdered by a Romanian policeman in the whirl of revenge. In my view, it is – among others – the past of the heroine of Thomas Hardy's *Tess of the d'Urbervilles* (1891) that resounds in the surrogate character of the Transylvanian Katalin Varga. In 2009, the director creates the deliberately cruel murderess version of the gentle and innocent Tess, forced from love to murder. The film is connected to this novel, as the literary (female) subconscious of Katalin Varga's act, not only at the level of the theme, but also poetically, in the identification of nature and woman. Through the superimposition of the inner and the outer points of view, we can see the images of nature as the projections of the protagonist's feelings, we perceive the forest in an individualised way, with Katalin Varga's eyes and ears, as being magically fearful (see mins. 19–21. of the film), and, in this way, we start perceiving the heroine herself as being inscrutably dreadful.[18]

17 Thus it is not accidental that the author of an article in *The Independent* speaks downright about the Middle Ages in connection with the film: "Filmed and set in Transylvania, Katalin Varga takes place in the present, although only the occasional baseball cap or mobile phone tells you that. Otherwise, the story is so timeless that we could be in the Middle Ages, or watching a historical tragedy that might have inspired an opera by Bartok or Janacek" (Romney 2009).

18 "The world is only a psychological phenomenon" – the director creates a dark and wild version of Hardy's principle in associating Katalin Varga with the forests and mountains. Hardy writes about the harmonious connexion of nature and the female figure, as well as about the antagonism between the law of society and nature: while Tess becomes part of nature and nature becomes one with her story, the anonymous phantoms of society hover around her, keeping her in a constant state of distress,

Identification of Nature and Woman – Cultural Violence, Surveillance

In the opening of *Delta*, the position of classical colonial films is evoked: we approach the natural landscape of the rising sun from the outside, by ship. After the title denoting the Greek letter, on the first image we can see a ship approaching, or rather our viewpoint approaches it, and with a cut the viewpoint is moved to the ship, we contemplate the land at dawn from there, together with the arriving person. The duality of outside–inside, of foreign–own is created in the arrival that opens the film.[19] [Figs. 7– 8.]

It is difficult not to discern the similarity to the awakening gaze of the white male traveller/coloniser arriving at the virgin land. A horn startles our gaze revelling in the landscape and we can hear the voices of/stigmatising the land together with the arriving man: barking, mooing, pig screaming for long, then a shot and the first human voice, a question. "Who are you looking for? – My mother," the answer sounds. And glasses of brandy are clinking. A foreigner has arrived "home." But he does not have a place, he withdraws, more to the outside, into nature, into the waterfront cottage of the absent father; and he builds a house upon a place without a place, showing this way his power upon nature. [Fig. 9, the house on the water.]

It seems as if in this return it would be possible to turn back into a state prior to culture and to restart the creation story, to transcribe the incest prohibition.[20]

---

the heroine being trapped between the poles of an incomprehensible difference, between the mutually erasing forces of acceptance and rejection.

19 The film entitled *Transylvania 6-5000* (Rudy De Luca, 1985) is based on openly assuming these dualities implying colonialism, and creates the parody of the western Dracula-phantasy in form of an entertaining fable. As real enlighteners, the two American journalists and their female compatriot, whom they meet there, do not only domesticate the western phantasy but also the fears of the local people: the werwolf, Frankenstein and the rest of the monsters get out of the forest, of the cellar to the open main square and find a physical, medical explanation. This time the former Yugoslavia offered its natural and built culture as the surrogate scene of the myth of the Transylvanian monster. A 1963 cartoon bears the same title; in it, Bugs Bunny reads the Transylvanian vampire a lesson with the help of his readings; he knocks at the door of the vampire's castle by way of the misleading similarity between Pittsburgh Pennsylvania and Pittsburgh Transylvania. In fact the difference of the letters of the two names takes shape only in the cultural specificity of vampire and monster romanticism in both films, and in the titles *Transylvania 6-5000* one can hear the echoes of the American (colonial) tone of *Pennsylvania 6-5000* (Glenn Miller).

20 This claim bears a striking resemblance to the archetype of the inherently innocent American Adam arriving at the virgin land. In connection with this, the Prospero-complex expounded by Ella Shohat can be referred to; she describes the

However, the mythical state outside space and time is bound to the soil by a "barbarian" local culture, the story of the ancient, first brothers is woven into an inn-faced society; in spite of the fish multiplication and bread breaking, those born more "within" push them out, in a lifeless state, back into nature. Apparently, the classical colonising structure does not work, as the newcomer arrives *home* (and not in the virgin land to be conquered), in the motherland, looking for his mother, as one who was born *within*.

The foreign/familiar man arriving in the homeland (whom we can regard thus as a homecoming emigrant) constitutes a basic narrative structure forming element of the films *Dallas Pashamende* and *Dolina*. They arrive home, with an outlook essentially differring from that of the locals, to take their dead or absent fathers' place; they embody versions of the *readmission/extrusions* of the motherland. (In *Dolina*, we learn of Colentina Dunca as the lesbian ancestress of the place gradually, in parallel with the cocooning of the homecoming son.) And this is the key issue, whether the returning men come as "more civilised" colonisers and reconquer (with the camera) the nature, the culture, the women or, as belonging to the place, they can make the spectators experience the profound sense of foreignness of the own (land). *Dallas Pashamende* is partly an exception, as while it makes transportable the miserable images of a garbage dump, it also tries to make us believe that for a short period of time this environment is also suitable to provide happiness. Tony Gatlif's film entitled *Transylvania* (2006) is a variation on the narrative scheme of colonisation with gender role exchange and a happy ending. A foreign woman arrives in Transylvania and is looking for the father of her fetus in the foreign land. Her search route leads through the panorama, accompanied by music and dance, of Transylvanian ethnic groups, and, although the real father does not receive her, she becomes a mother and finds her home through experiencing the hell of disappointment in love in muddy Transylvanian forests, as the only example of motherhood shown as happy among the mother and woman figures appearing in the films under discussion. Based on these films, it seems that the used nature and culture can turn into motherland for foreign women, however, the women living there are either transported abroad or made surrogate, being represented as whores. (Mona, the heroine of *Bibliothèque Pascal* is also a loving unmarried mother, however,

relationship between the East and the West in terms of the so-called Prospero-complex: the barbarian island expects the western knowledge to start evolution in its primeval soup, and this civilising knowledge endowed with social gender is unequivocally phallocentric. Released from the bonds of European history, the American hero is the creator himself, in this way he can rightfully confer names, at the same time he himself is conferred the feature of innocence itself (cf. Shohat 1991, 45–84).

the nature of her motherhood can manifest in the "familiarity" of the Ikea shopping centre, that is, in the stylised environment of displaced home created among the furniture and objects available for purchase; by imitating the meal motherhood also acquires a sense of being simulated.)

Thus, the attempt of recapturing the deserted, the lost takes place in these male returns, similarly to (Romanian) geographical areas "hired" by cinematic representations. However, in the case of *Delta*, the mother earth that lies at the symbolic river mouth is simultaneously a primeval nature with a wonderful sound universe and a place of industrial defloration, just as the mother lives with a lover instead of the father. In the social gender and role division presented in the films, the role of the whore is associated with the roles of mother and woman, more precisely, the woman is identical with the whore. The whore, bound to mythical origins with the personal name Fauna in *Delta*, and as an apocryphal version of Christ's story as the fisher of men, as the wonderworker figure of the *woman-fisher of men* in *Little Apocrypha No. 2*, where as the white apparition of the burning reed she offers herself for money, displays paid pleasure-giving as the inherent nature of femininity. [Fig. 10.]

The unreflected evocations of the two films by Mundruczó maintain the classical (colonial) association of the virgin (land and woman), while rewriting only the virgin attribute. Not a foreigner arrives at an unknown virgin land; the son returns to motherland, this is why the human relationship breaking the social contract, the incest can be presented as natural. Women, in turn, are not virgins, but already "conquered" bodies, women raped and made surrogates of motherhood.

"*Say that you are a whore!*" – the *Delta* ends, while Fauna is killed into the water. And *Katalin Varga* starts with "*The whole village will take me as the husband of a whore, of a bitch!*" In the latter, the spectator is also clearly positioned: the film starts with the dark voice of the supervising male power, and later on we can see from an inner viewpoint who the object of this supervision, the addresee of the voice is. A female figure quivers to the policeman's instruction in Romanian. [Figs. 11–12.]

The eponymous protagonist of *Iszka's Journey* chooses the freedom provided by the alcoholic mother instead of the structure of orphanage supervision and gets from the mud of the mining colony to the desired real sea, into the bilge of a ship which transports her, together with other Romanian girls, supposedly towards a western shore.[21] For the girls speaking Romanian and Hungarian, the

21 *Iszka's Journey* figures in this group as one which contributes to the series of images that transport vulnerable Romanian girls for the western gaze with a moving documentary story. This feature of it is reinforced by the context created by the other films, at the detriment of the individual performance of the film.

craw of the ship is the chronotope of shedding; as a heterotopic place, it is a surrogate, from where the shipment will get out raped and dressed as whores.

The speech situation of the interrogation frames the film entitled *Bibliothèque Pascal* as well: a child protection officer with a human face sits opposite to the protagonist, Mona and asks questions, urging her to tell her story. One of the film's merits is that the supervising male position is displaced and turns into solidarity, as, in spite of the fact that for the interrogating party, Mona's unrealistic story unequivocally belongs to the sphere of the unreal (this is why he has her translate her story into a more believable version), still, he gives the child back to the mother.

Those women who travel (Iszka and Mona) and bear the motherland as stigmata on/in themselves, do not *arrive* to the West, as men do in the opposite direction and as Tony Gatlif's only western female figure, Zingarina does to Transylvania, but they are *transported* out to the West, under supervision. They are identified with this *transportedness*, that they come from somewhere, they belong to somewhere else, and they bear this otherness as stigmata on themselves, that they were brought as objects to the West so that they should never become mothers, but only surrogate women. Pascal, who is otherwise also an immigrant, inquires about Mona's nationality and after the supposition of her being Albanian he directly asks: "Or Romanian?" As he does not ask further questions, and as there is no response, this nationality remains inscribed upon the image of the woman huddling herself up on the floor. This is also important from the standpoint how Mona's double – that is, both Romanian and Hungarian – *self*-definition, as she uttered this earlier in the film, gets reduced in the western expropriating gaze. [Figs. 13–14.]

Although *Bibliothèque Pascal* also centres on this female transport, it deconstructs the stereotypical western cultural construction of nature = woman, civilisation = man. In the depository of culture, that is, the library, *the woman (can) take shape as something wild in the readings of the civilised man*, while female nature remains concealed as the carrier of these readings, and *female bodies function as surrogates of cultural references, intertexts, archetypes and literary heroes*.[22] In this way the film questions the cultural superiority of the western civilised man as well as the consciousness of superiority of the "users" of the masterpieces of western literature. It queries the masculine consciousness

22 The two female literary figures embodied by Mona as a whore, Saint Joan and Desdemona, the latter also being her namesake, bear a rich depository of issues related to male-female roles, social codes (cf. "Men's clothing is an unnatural thing" on a female body), respectively, to the contact between the European woman and the foreign (Moor) man. All these show that the film "uses" the "exploitedness" of the female figure in a reflected way.

which shows the female figures as dead, which objectifies them as beautiful phantoms, with an aesthetic lust. In the case of *Delta*, we can see Fauna as dead while she is still alive, represented with a picturesque beauty evoking Andrea Mantegna; after being murdered, Katalin Varga gets gradually mummified, acquiring a phantom face. [Figs. 15–16: Female (image) aestheticised as dead; Figs. 17–19: Phantomisation of the female face.]

The Place of the Magic –You Wild Girls, don't do it!

It is a common specificity of these films that they choose natural scenes that can be transformed into mythical ones – river mouth, Danube delta, mountain, forest, cave –, on the other hand, they choose the unreal space of dream, which metaleptically intersects the diegesis of harsh reality, or general moods that have their own (autonomous) laws.

Dallas Pashamende (2005) and *Dolina* (2006), though the former is realistic, whereas the latter strives to an opposite effect, display several similarities: nature and culture meet in the waste in the visual presentation of both films, further on, they also share a grotesque mode of representation. *Dolina* rather mummifies the nature and the characters into stylisation, while *Dallas* impresses the spectators with its naturalistic, olfactive images.[23] [Figs. 20–23.]

Most often, the objects of grotesque representation are women. The image of the lady with a parasol and in a lace dress from the smelly dump-universe of *Dallas* rhymes with the image, also with a parasol, of the lesbian ancestress seesawing in the white sterilised landscape from *Dolina*. Not even on the awaiting image of the tabby-brides can we regard the lace and the boots on the white rock of Dolina as being other than the tragicomic, controversial imprints of female exposedness. The institution of marriage is represented in these films as the only alternative to the whore existence. The single women are either kept in confinement or they are transported away. [Figs. 24–25.]

The twofold world structure of wife-whore is also well illustrated by the formation story of the heroine of *Bibliothèque Pascal*; even her initially independent female existence is represented as depending on male judgement

23 The film entitled *Dolina* is the adaptation of Ádám Bodor's novel entitled *The Archbishop's Visit* (*Az érsek látogatása*, 1999). The film and the literary work mostly differ in the very respect that in the novel the narrator is one of the "insiders," so the reader perceives the created universe from this inner viewpoint, and does not view it as being objectified from the outside. Another essential difference between the two works is that while in the film we can see a mummified nature, stylised into unreality, throughout the novel we can perceive the sounding, smelling nature of the written landscape mediated by the visual, acoustic and olfactive senses.

(when getting acquainted, one of the first questions the father of her future child addresses to her is "Are you a whore?" – indicating thus that the existence of a free woman other than a whore is profoundly questionable), and even her freedom falls victim to paternal emotional tyranny. In the analysed films, the family as the public space of the intimacy of parents and children does not exist, it cannot be created for this geographically localised culture, it only functions as a social institution with the structure of supervision. Not even the status of a wife exempts one from the assigned role of being a whore (see Katalin Varga or the female figures of *Dolina* and *Dallas Pashamende*) or an alcoholic (Iszka's mother), or living together with a lover (Mihail's mother in *Delta*); there is one single "pure" wife in the shape of the maidenly wife of Katalin Varga's raper, however, she does not have any other alternative than committing suicide.

It is right by the time she grows old that the wife of the Székely primary school teacher, of a respectable age, of the road movie entitled *Adventurers* (*Kalandorok*, 2008) loses her mind, more precisely, the prescribed role of the wife, and realises her being cheated on in the self-mirror of the popular soap operas watched on television. This is why the respectful old husband is compelled to call his only son home from Budapest, who also calls his only son to come to rescue him from the clutches of the ferocious wife finding herself at this late age. And while the three generations of men are escaping from Transylvania towards Hungary, leaving the wife behind in the disorganised household with a Székely gate so that she can watch the television series in the absence of the husband and find herself and her feminist consciousness, as they are leaving the mountainous country, they meet other women, a good-looking Hungarian lady transporting in the boot of her car her freshly murdered Romanian guy. They also meet on their way the teenager daughter of the big Roma family, after that they try to flee across the green frontier together with Afghan refugees. It is through no fault of their own that they stray to this way, they fall victim of manly chivalrousness, with respect to the lady, as they have connected to their own car the above-mentioned car with the boot, which has broken down in the meantime. This is why they also hope that she will solve their housing problems on the other side of the frontier. We can only hope that the lady does not have such a big boot which would have enough room for all these three respectful men. In spite of the excellent performance of the actors, the viewer cannot forget the version understood as inner colonisation of the colonial narrative: an emigrant son arrives "home" from Hungary to Transylvania, but the motherland, more precisely, the mother does not receive him back, what is more, she also

extrudes the father from the household/marriage.[24] The Romanian male corpse, tattooed from top to toe, the representation of the Roma family, in addition to these, the Afghan refugees betray such a degree of unreflected cultural consciousness on the part of the filmmakers that we finally have the impression that we understand why the Székely woman, in order to find herself as a woman, is forced to take her models from Spanish soap operas.

Zoltán Kamondi's earlier film, entitled *The Alchemist and the Virgin* (*Az alkimista és a szűz*, 1998) is also built on the route Budapest–Transylvania. The inundated village in Transylvania (Bözöd) appears as the successfully functioning scene of alchemy; in the spirit of the place, the people living on the water are ardent believers worshipping the blind clairvoyant. The virgin is not a local this time either (as they are manipulable herd-creatures), she arrives from the outside, from Budapest as the clairvoyant himself, to contribute to the exploring spirit of the place, so that the promising experiment should be born in the rocky, watery ancient cave. It seems that the natural conditions, specificities of Transylvania and Romania (such as the heterotopia of the Hungarian village inundated in the period of communism) attract filmmakers, as the simulation of nature can be realised the least in the film medium. The illusion of buildings, city details can be built, however, mountains, villages under water with a church tower rising in the middle of the lake can hardly be constructed. At least it is more costly than hiring the place itself.

It is in a natural environment similar to the previous film (though not in a cave, but in a mountain stream surrounded by rocks) localised in Harghita county (as we can see the name of the county on a map on the wall) that we can peep, with the eye of the detective, at the wild girl while bathing in Dezső Zsigmond's film entitled *Witch Circle* (2009). [Fig. 26.]

The latter film strives to record the local legend on the screen, it can also be called an ethnographic feature film, by the superimposition of natural images and human faces, it suggests the stratification place–people–belief. Although it makes use of stereotypes (dance, brandy, fighting) and of the opposition wild nature – domesticated culture (bound to houses, to husbands), it strives to capture the local free spirit of the wild girls shown as free on the analogy of wild horses, or of the 'Szépasszonyok' – who do not fit into the social/linguistic order in the conversation between two men quoted by me in the motto. In the identification nature–eroticism–woman and in their joint impossibility to be harnessed, the independent wild girls, as embodying the archetypal *couleur locale* of today's singles, become the geographical creatures of imagination in a way that they can

24 One personifier of the colonial structure of the return to the homeland can be the figure of the emigrant. This type is examined from the viewpoint of memory by Strausz (2011).

be regarded at the same time as the cultural (phantom) projections of the primeval male fear of the reversed power relations.

Whereas the scene of executing the man/lover in *Bibliothèque Pascal* is raised into virtuality through series of references to visual representations (Manet, Magritte, Robbe-Grillet), in *Witch Circle* we can see the male detective, caught by darkness on the mountain, as disappearing without a trace in the circle of the wild girls' white veils, in the bosom of nature. And the latter can seem fearful not only because it is not men who kill with weapons in an allusive visual representation, that is, in accordance with western codes, but because the wild girls, veiled as phantoms, charm away the detective from the face of nature in a way that no trace is left behind, not even as a dead image. Not a sign remains as a testimony that he has ever existed. The dead man gets out of the cycle of representation. [See Fig. 27: visual allusion in the execution scene of *Bibliothèque Pascal* (Éduard Manet: *Execution of Emperor Maximilian of Mexico*, 1868; *Alain Robbe-Grillet: La belle captive*, 1983).]

In relation to the analysed films, I did not miss the representation of some kind of original, organic, real culture, instead, I identified the specific scheme, created in this space, of the colonial viewpoint in the inner colonising relation between the homecoming/foreigner/emigrant and the motherland contradictorily receiving/ rejecting him. In the hired geography of Transylvania and Romania, stories have been settled along similar stereotypes: the one arriving in the landscape, in the space, meets humans and animals (beside the head of the local inhabitant a calf head can be seen, for instance, at the arrival of the protagonist, wearing glasses and an iPod in *Dolina*), pig scream, horses, cows, and, of course, bears also create the non-urban environment of the locals. Most of the time the public places are inns and main squares where the fights take place.

The protagonists of the films are all homeless characters who do not find their place, they move to places without a place (into a house on water in the *Delta*), they get to such places (Iszka into the craw of the ship, Mona into the library-brothel), they "live" in a village under water (the inhabitants of *The Alchemist and the Virgin*), they loiter in mummified nature (the ancient dwellers of *Dolina*), they haunt in the mysterious bosom of nature (the wild girls of *Witch Circle*). However, all these heterotopic places do not distance the stories from the concrete cultural geography, they rather present heterotopia as the nature of the given place and this is why my hired homeland can become, through these cinematic representations, the balladistic depository of magic, alchemy, dreamworld and myth.

References

Bakhtin, Mikhail Mikhailovici. 1981. Forms of Time and of the Chronotope in the Novel: Notes toward a Historical Poetics. In *The Dialogic Imagination. Four essays*, ed. Michael Holquist, 84–258. Austin: University of Texas Press.

Bradshaw, Peter. 2009. The following correction was printed in the Guardian's Corrections and clarifications column. *Guardian* 13 (October). *http://www.guardian.co.uk/film/2009/oct/ 08 katalin-varga-review*

Catsoulis, Jeanette. 2010. Delta (2008) Trouble in the Village. *The New York Times*. 11 (March*). http://movies.nytimes.com/2010/03/12/movies/12delta. html*

Derrida, Jacques. 1997 [1993]. *Ki az anya?* [*Qui est la mére? Naissance, nature, nation*] Pécs: Jelenkor.

Derrida, Jacques 2001 [1978]. Structure, Sign, and Play in the Discourse of the Human Sciences. In *Writing and Difference*, 351–371. London: Routledge.

Djuvara, Neagu. 2011. *From Vlad the Impaler to Dracula the Vampire*. Bucharest: Humanitas.

Földes, András. 2007. Törőcsik Mari az időgépben. [Mari Törőcsik in the Time Machine]. *http://index.hu/kultur/cinematrix/kritika/bollok0204/*.

Földes, András. 2008. Újabb áldozatot szedett a tarrbélásodás. [Béla Tarr's Style Has Taken New Victim]. *http://index.hu/kultur/cinematrix/ccikkek/ delt0204/*.

Hardy, Thomas. [1891] *Tess of the d'Urbervilles. http://www.online-literature. com/ hardy/ tess_urbervilles/*.

Kiss, András. 1980. *Varga Katalin pere*. [*Katalin Varga's Cause*]. Bucharest: Kriterion.

Koselleck, Reinhart. 1975. Zur historisch-politischen Semantik asymmetrischer Gegenbegriffe. In *Positionen der Negativität. Poetik und Hermeneutik VI.*, ed. Hrsg. Harald Weinrich, 65–104. München: Wilhelm Fink Verlag.

Lévi-Strauss, Claude. 1976. *Structural Anthropology*, vol. 2, New York: Basic Books.

Moore, David Chioni. 2001. Is the Post in Postcolonial the Post in Post-Soviet? Notes Toward a Global Postcolonial Critique. *PMLA* 116. (January): 111–128.

Oksanen, Sofi. 2011. A diktatúra természetrajza. Pasztercsák Ágnes beszélgetése (interjú). [The Nature of Dictatorship. Ágnes Pasztercsák's interview], *Jelenkor* (October): 1000–1004.

Romney, Jonathan. 2009. Katalin Varga, Peter Strickland, 82 mins, (15). *The Independent*. 11 (October). *http://www.independent.co.uk/arts-entertainment/ films/reviews/katalin-varga-peter-strickland-82-mins-15-1800771.html.*

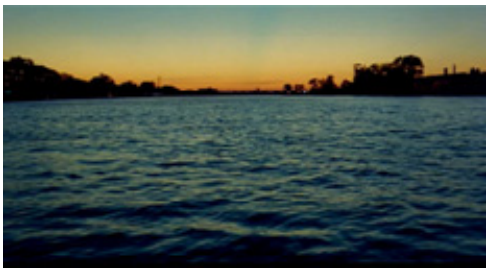
Ryan, James R. 2004. Postcolonial Geographies. In *A Companion to Cultural Geography*, eds. Duncan, James S., Nuala C. Johnson, and Richard H. Schein, 469–485. Malden: Blackwell Publishing.
Said, Edward. 1979. *Orientalism*. New York: Vintage Books.
Shohat, Ella. 1991. Gender and Culture of Empire: Toward a Feminist Ethnography of the Cinema. *Quarterly Review of Film and Video* vol. 13. Issue 1–3: 45–84.
Stam, Robert and Spence, Louise. 1983. Colonialism, Racism and Representation. *Screen* vol. 24 no. 2: 2–20.
Strausz, László. 2011. Vissza a múltba. Az emlékezés tematikája fiatal magyar rendezőknél. [Back into the Past. The Theme of Memory with Young Hungarian Directors]. *Metropolis* no. 3: 20–28.
Tóth, Zoltán. 1951. *Varga Katalin.* [*Katalin Varga*]. Budapest: Művelt Nép Könyvkiadó.

List of Figures

Figures 1–4. Kornél Mundruczó: *Delta* (2008).

Figures 5–6. Structural similarity, mediated localisation.

Figures 7–10.



Figures 11–12.

Figures 13–14. Szabolcs Hajdú: *Bibliotheque Pascal* (2010 Translation of subtitles: "Or Romanian? Men's clothing is an unnatural thing.").

Figures 15–16. Female (image) aestheticised as dead in Kornél Mundruczó: *Delta.*

Figures 17–19. Phantomisation of the female face in Peter Strickland: *Katalin Varga* (2009).

Figures 20–23. Waste-land: Róbert Pejó's *Dallas Pashamende* (2005), Zoltán Kamondi's *Dolina* (2006).

Figures 24–25. Female elegance at the garbage dump in *Dolina*.

Figures 26–27. Dezső Zsigmond: *Witch Circle* (*Boszorkánykör*, 2009) and visual allusion in the execution scene of *Bibliothèque Pascal* (Éduard Manet: *Execution of Emperor Maximilian of Mexico* [1868], Alain Robbe-Grillet: *La belle captive* [1983]).

ACTA UNIV. SAPIENTIAE, FILM AND MEDIA STUDIES, 5 (2012) 129–145

Performing Northern Places and Identities in Children's Still-Picture Animation Films

Eija Timonen, Mari Mäkiranta
University of Lapland (Finland)
E-mails: eija.timonen@ulapland.fi, mari.makiranta@ulapland.fi

Abstract. This article concentrates on four still-picture animation films aimed at children, *Rune Box*, *On the Pike's Shoulders*, *Päiviö's Feast*, and *The Feather Gown*, all of which were presented on YLE, the national Finnish television channel, between 1990 and 2010. These animation films aim to preserve and reshape the Finnish cultural heritage, its myths and tales examining questions of life and death, the North, nature, and the relationships between animals and humans. By close-reading the animations, the article illustrates how the animations shape cultural memory, the concepts of place, and questions of identity. The analysis reveals the utilisation of northern images and beliefs in children's fiction. It also highlights the kind of visual and cultural elements that are in contemporary children's media representations associated with the North. In the article, we postulate, first, that, in these animations, place is constructed via a network of practical, local, historically shifting interaction, which also features, in addition to practical considerations, an ethical consideration of place and nature. Second, we argue, that the dominant media helps to construct a global, homogenous children's culture, represented, for instance, in *Disney* animations. The animations that we examine in our article, however, belong to a culturally and geographically specific place and make full use of the imagery, themes, and language of the local tradition. Our third point is that the experience of watching still-picture animations produces cultural memory (cf. Sturken and Cartwright 2009), which is passed from one generation to the next and which enables the construction of a locally rooted identity. The article draws on post-structuralist theories of identity, representation, and place, as well as debates in media studies.

This article examines four still-picture animation films aimed at children, all screened as part of children's programming on *YLE*, the Finnish national broadcaster, from the 1990s onwards.[1] A common feature of all four of the still-

1 These animations were screened as part of a children's show called Pikku Kakkonen ('Little Channel Two'). The show first aired in 1977 and has maintained its position as the most popular programme for pre-school-aged children in Finland. The age of

picture animations we have examined is that their respective stories take place either partially or entirely in the North. The concept of the North in these still-picture animations is not defined only as a geographical place. Rather North is understood as a space constructed using a variety of visual elements and narrative devices referring to northern environments and livelihoods.

We understand spaces and landscapes as parts of both a physical and a mental reality (Ruotsala 2008, 48). Seen from this perspective, these notions of places are not static, rather they are constantly being shaped and reshaped through the interaction of humans, their surrounding environments and different visual representations. Thus places shape their users, agents and viewers who, through their deeds and actions, shape the meanings attached to these places.

At the heart of our article is the question what kind of place and space is the North portrayed in the animations *On the Pike's Shoulders* (*Hauen harteilla*, 2004), *Päiviö's Feast* (*Päiviön pidot*, 1995), *The Rune Box* (*Riimurasia*, 1994), and *The Feather Gown* (*Sulkapuku*, 2004). What are the visual and narrative elements used to construct the persona of the North? And what kind of identity and ethos do these animations permit from the perspective of the central characters? We will seek to address these questions by exploring the stories in these animations and their interpretive processes. We will examine the plots from the perspective of how events are initiated, how places and locations change, the 'now' of the stories, and the construction in the narrative of themes related to the concept of the North. Additionally, we will take due note of the motives behind the protagonists' actions and character traits that affect events unfolding in the narrative. The focus will be on the notion of interpretive process (Hall 1997, 15–19) by considering how animated stories overlap with general visual depictions of and stories about the North and images presented throughout our western culture.

At the beginning of the article, we will briefly outline the content of each animation and assess the significance of the locations they present as well as the manner in which those locations are visualised. After this, we will introduce the characters featured in the animations and the ways in which the characters relate to the narrative spaces in which they find themselves. To conclude, we will examine the ways in which different kinds of locations are constructed and conceptualised, and we will consider the role of children's television programmes in contemporary media culture.

children who regularly watch the show ranges from two to nine. One particular feature of the show in its current form is that the producers and presenters were once active viewers of the show in their own childhood. Additionally, the children of many people born in the 1970s have subsequently become regular viewers in the 2000s.

The Four Animations: A Brief Content Outline

The still-picture animation *Riimurasia* takes place in the mountainous landscapes of the far North. The animation tells the story of Jouni, a young Sámi boy, as he journeys with the reindeer across the fells of Lapland, dizzy as they speed across the hills. Eventually, Jouni finds a Lappish sled; inside the sled he finds the rune box, and inside that there is a hidden treasure. When he wakes up, ready to return home, he gets lost and soon realises that the hilly landscape has changed and seems somehow strange. In a hollow in the side of the mountain, he finds a little cabin where he can spend the night. The people in the cabin warn Jouni of a group of gold diggers who would make a racket at night. That night, Jouni encounters the group of men, who are all interested in the rune box and the treasures inside it. Jouni hides inside a bearskin hanging on the wall and, disguised as a bear, scares the men and sends them on their way. To thank him, the people in the cabin give Jouni a reindeer, which he can ride all the way home. Once he returns home, Jouni becomes a reindeer herd, starts a family, and becomes a very good storyteller. [Figs. 1–2.]

In the still-picture animation entitled *On the Pike's Shoulders*, a boy named Pekka goes to visit a mystical witch doctor in order to fetch medicine to help his sister, who is seriously ill. He travels through an underwater world, a deserted island, and the arid tundra, and on his way he encounters a pike, a deer, and an eagle. The animals set Pekka a series of tasks; each time he successfully completes a task, he receives useful advice about his journey. Eventually, Pekka reaches the witch doctor and is given the healing potion to take home. His sister recovers and will no longer have to join her father in the starry sky. [Fig. 3.]

In *Päiviö's Feast*, a young reindeer herd named Päiviö finds a good campsite in the fells at *Pyhätunturi* (*Pyhä Fell*), where he sets up camp and falls asleep. While he is asleep, Päiviö is tied up by the earth spirits. They carry him back to their underground kingdom, where Päiviö meets Maaria, a young woman under the spell of the earth spirits. Päiviö manages to resist the earth spirits' attempts to bring him under their spell and eventually escapes their underground world. Still, he cannot forget Maaria. Almost by accident, he finds a gap at the bottom of a pond in the tundra and sees the earth spirits' crystal chandeliers shining through it. Päiviö manages to pull Maaria free through the gap in the tundra pond. Päiviö and Maaria begin to herd the reindeer together and have lots of children. [Figs. 4–5.]

In the animation *The Feather Gown*, a village is caught in the grip of famine, as an unknown black figure has stolen all the village's animals. A young boy,

Taneli, cannot bear to watch his family's distress and decides to leave the village in search of the animals. On his journey, he finds a magic feather, which he can use to fly north in the form of an owl. On the way, he encounters the daughters of dusk, the sons of the northern lights, and a series of rocky rapids. He finds the village's animals stranded on an uninhabited island on the other side of the rapids. Taneli releases the animals and travels home with them. Soon the villagers can put food on their tables and the streets are once again filled with the sound of children's laughter. [Fig. 6.]

The Empirical and Mythical North

The animated stories depict two northern locations, which we will describe as the empirical and the mythical North. The empirical North refers to the everyday North inhabited by real people. In these stories, the empirical North is associated with a real-life everyday reality defined by family, home, relationships, livelihoods, and humans' interaction with their surrounding environments. The significance of empirical spaces is created biographically within the timeframe of people's – in this instance, the characters in the stories – actions, deeds, and experiences (Karjalainen 2004, 59–65; 2008, 16–18; Relph 1986).

In these stories, the empirical North is situated in and around the home and its immediate vicinity. For instance, the animation *Päiviö's Feast* depicts *Pyhätunturi* (*Pyhä Fell*), an existing geographical location in Finnish Lapland. The events depicted in *The Rune Box* are also situated in the fells of Lapland. The visual worlds of both animations feature collectively recognisable items associated with northern locations, including fells, lassoes, reindeer, sleds, and traditional Sámi costumes. In particular, the reindeer and reindeer herding are considered symbolic of the traditional Sámi cultures and as examples of a way of life adapted to suit the Arctic environment (Valkonen 2003, 20). Central to the notion of the empirical North is that in these still-picture animations, the harmony of day-to-day life, everyday forms of life, and ways of life adapted to the surrounding environment are questioned as a result of various threats, such as disease or famine.

In the empirical North, the protagonist of the story is intrinsically linked to a real environment. For instance, in *The Rune Box*, the narrator says: "Jouni had been hunting in the fells for three days, but still he had caught nothing. The temperature had dropped further and night was approaching when Jouni finally set off on his way home." In this way, the empirical North is defined as a concrete, material space in which the characters seem to belong to an empirical location and which gradually becomes part of the character's experiential world,

emotions, and location-specific interpretation (cf. Karjalainen 1997, 235; Tuan 1977, 8–11; Relph 1986).

As a space, the empirical North could also be seen as the starting point for the events in the story, a place from which the plot gradually moves towards the mythical North. The term 'mythical North' refers to a depiction of a place that helps us better understand different aspects of nature and reality (cf. Fiske 1996). Myths give us models about how cosmos is structured and what human's place is there. They highlights the themes like origins, limits, secrets and future. Interpretations and applications of myths vary from one epoch to another, but their structures and deductive methods are cross-historical in terms of their inertia (Knuuttila 2010, 16). In these stories, the mythical North is depicted with the use of the worlds of fantasy and belief, in which places, ages, people, and other beings do not directly represent reality. Typical of the mythical North is the notion of omnipotence: the heroes and their adversaries are omnipotent for the forces of both good and bad.

The concept of the mythical North is closely related to the idea of the metaphor, whereby northern nature, landscape and reality are depicted using some secondary element or visual figures of speech (cf. Forceville 1996). For instance, in the animation *On the Pike's Shoulders* the house of eternal darkness is an embodiment of people's fears and illness, and, within the framework of the story, forms a contrast to the light, safe lakeside landscapes of the empirical North. The house of eternal darkness, seen as an opposing force to the light of the lakeside landscape, creates narrative tension in which the real world is questioned while at the same time being portrayed as an ideal living environment, a counterbalance to the images of threats from the fictitious world. These animations also contain ideas of possible worlds (cf. Ryan 1991) in which, through the use of fiction, the real world can appear in a new light and in which real and fictive worlds and the relationships between them are explored and thematised.

As they are portrayed in these animations, the empirical North and the mythical North are not opposites of each other and do not represent separate spaces, rather they define one another and are intrinsically linked to one another in various ways. Neither is the North conceptualised as standing in opposition to the South, as is the case in the traditions of cultural research and in the centre–periphery model (cf. Savolainen 1995, 7–35; Voigt 2002, 42–49), rather it is always viewed in relation to other internal elements within the North. The North of these still-picture animations is at once an exciting stage where strange events take place and a cosy, familiar back garden. The nature and landscape of the North is also depicted in the stories as diverse and changing with the seasons. The stories intertwine and explore the perspectives

of different-aged people and of both men and women on the empirical and mythical North, as they see it. In the blink of an eye, the everyday, empirical North can change, becoming an unfamiliar and frightening North in which strange figures and events take over. Conversely, the protagonists can easily return from the fantasy world of the mythical North to their home territory.

Movement between the places of the empirical and the mythical North occurs as a series of transitions. In *Päiviö's Feast*, the transition from the familiar North to the unknown mythical North sets in motion a process that denies Päiviö his freedom. The next morning, Päiviö wakes up to find himself tied up at his campsite. He has the sensation of "countless hands holding him up and carrying him slowly into a dark room." The earth spirits transport Päiviö from his snow-covered campsite to their underground chambers. A similar point of transition from the empirical to the mythical North is the pond in the tundra through which Päiviö rescues his friend Maaria from the underworld at the end of the story [Fig. 5].

The transition of Jouni, the protagonist of the animation *The Rune Box*, from an empirical to a mythical space occurs in stages: the familiar, safe landscape of the fells gradually changes into something altogether unfamiliar and strange. Although the landscapes around him are, at least in theory, familiar to a certain degree, they seem somewhat strange, and, from the perspective of everyday reality, a number of 'weird' things occur, like sudden appearance and disappearance of the reindeer with golden horns. This story appeals to the collective experience of those who have ever gone hiking in the fells: a landscape that always looks the same can suddenly seem strange and even threatening if you get lost. In this story, the mythical North is seen as both a topophobic and a topophilic place (cf. Tuan 1990, 93, 247). Primarily, in this instance, the mythical North refers to the strong emotional bond between humans and location, the sense that a place is one's own, a place where calm and peace can thrive. On the other hand, the mythical North is portrayed as a variety of negative emotions, such as fear, associated with that place.

In the animations *The Feather Gown* and *On the Pike's Shoulders*, the North is seen as a destination, somewhere the characters travel once they leave home. The home and the far-away North are clearly defined as separate places. In these two animations, the area around the home or the local village is the stage that initiates the events and where they come to an end. For instance, in *On the Pike's Shoulders* Pekka leaves the safety of his home behind him and travels through various underwater regions towards the stone mountain and through the thicket towards the house of darkness [see Fig. 3]. The story demonstrates that the further one progresses from home and the closer one travels to the North, the more difficult the terrain and arduous the journey become. The story

also highlights the double theme linked to our experience of home: the need to leave and the need to stay (cf. Karjalainen 1999, 85). The North of the story in *Sulkapuku* is also a place the characters reach by travelling far away from home. The protagonist Taneli travels in the form of an owl, flying for many days through unknown regions.

In both *The Feather Gown* and *On the Pike's Shoulders*, the North is defined as a place that is hard to reach, indeed, as a place one can only reach with the help of animals. This North, hard to reach and full of treacherous terrain, is defined in these stories as the extreme North, a place where the bravery and skills of the protagonists will be put to the test. The extreme North, a place at the ends of the Earth, also provides help for the problems faced by communities in the stories, be they famine (as in *The Feather Gown*) or sickness (as in *On the Pike's Shoulders*). These stories reveal themes similar to those in shamanistic travel stories, in which the shaman, in the face of great danger and difficulty, travels with the help of animals high and low to find solutions to the problems faced by the community (cf. Siikala 1994; Pentikäinen 1995; Pentikäinen 2006). The island behind the bubbling rapids in *The Feather Gown* has clear overtones with the poetics of the journey to the underworld (*tuonela*) in Finnish mythology. Indeed, the bleak and treacherous rocky terrain in *On the Pike's Shoulders* refers to the depictions of mountains in mythical Finnish topography (cf. Siikala 2002, 20–22).

Both *On the Pike's Shoulders* and *The Feather Gown* are journey stories in that it is impossible to draw any clear topography of where the North starts and where it ends. In *The Feather Gown*, the North is depicted through the theme of being continually on the move. The journey, and thus the destination in the North as well, consists of a number of steps and challenges through which the protagonist solves the basic questions of existence, such as sickness, well-being, and humans' place in the world. In this sense, the mythical North reflects features familiar from the mythical regions of Finnish and Scandinavian mythology, including descriptions of the difficulties encountered on the path leading to the other world and adversaries capable of metamorphosis, such as supernatural animals (cf. Siikala 1994, 144; 2002).

In these stories, the transitions from the home to the North or from the empirical to the mythical North are challenging both geographically and from the protagonist's perspective. Numerous transformations occur between these places, some of which involve the protagonist changing from a human form to an animal form. The tasks and challenges encountered in the empirical, everyday North appear as human challenges in that it is acceptable and, indeed, necessary to seek help with them, as is the case with sickness and famine. Conversely, in the parts of the stories set in the mythical North, the protagonist addresses existential

problems and the universal ethical and moral questions that affect humanity as a whole. These stories are essentially progressive, as they offer a problem-solving model and, through this, the possibility of controlling the situation at hand. They do not, however, remove culturally embedded conflicts and do not deny the existence of semantic binaries, such as this world vs. the other world, human vs. supernatural, etc. (cf. Greimas 1980, 241–242). What these stories do is provide a solution to how we can live with and resolve these conflicts.

In the two stories that begin firmly rooted in the empirical North, *Päiviö's Feast* and *The Rune Box*, the protagonist enters the mythical North against his will. These transitions into the mythical North are unpleasant for both protagonists, despite their apparent bravery. However, in the stories dealing explicitly with the motif of the journey into the mythical North, *The Feather Gown* and *On the Pike's Shoulders*, the protagonist undertakes the journey of his own volition. In this way, a bond is established between the mythical North and the hero of the story: the North is needed so that the community or an individual can overcome adversity.

Because the North of these stories belongs to the past, the sphere of influence between nature, humans, and culture is very close, indeed. These still-picture animations strengthen the stereotypical view that a fundamental part of the Sámi –and, indeed, the northern Finnish – ethnic identity is a special relationship with nature and a universal understanding of the importance of fishing, hunting, and reindeer herding as livelihoods (cf. Pennanen 2000, 13–16; Pentikäinen 1995; 2006). In comparison to the realities of contemporary life in the North, these stories demonstrate the ways in which regions, places, and ways of life have changed through time and how people living in the same geographical place nowadays live in very different social and environmental spaces from people who lived a hundred years ago (cf. Valkonen 2005, 17). We postulate that, in these animations, the empirical and the mythical North are constructed through the active relationships between the characters: in these stories, place is constructed via a network of practical, local, historically shifting interaction, which also features, in addition to practical considerations, an ethical consideration of place and nature (cf. Macnaghten and Urry 1998). In particular, places are constructed through the protagonists' personal experiences and are manifested as homesteads, peat-bogs, fells. This, in essence, relates to the transferral of cultural understanding and the process of constructing northern locations as expressed through these animations.

Complex Character Gallery

The northern people presented in these animations are not simply reindeer herders, hunters, and wives, rather they have many roles and characteristics that are brought to life in different places and in a number of ways. The North is a place populated not only by people and animals but also by a variety of fantasy creatures.

In these stories, a character can change form during the course of a tale: for instance, in the empirical North, the protagonist can first appear as a playful little boy, while as he moves towards the mythical North he turns into a hero with the supernatural skills necessary for the various stages of the journey. In *The Feather Gown*, the boy turns into an owl, speaks with animals, resolves their problems, answers questions, and immediately begins to doubt his own powers. The transition from an empirical space to a mythical space opens up a variety of action spaces and possibilities for the protagonist. Particularly in the case of the hero–agent role, these stories involve, in line with the basic universal mythological schema, magical skills and the ability to overcome physical and psychological obstacles (cf. Campbell 1990, 34). Adventures of this kind symbolise the process of finding one's identity and the dangers and difficulties involved in developing oneself. The hero is also momentarily identified as a societal part of the mythical world (therefore, one outside the empirical world) (cf. Tasker 1993, 148). The function of myths is, after all, to provide solutions with which to address the fundamental conflicts of our culture. Such conflicting binaries include life/death, close/far, North/South, sickness/health, happiness/unhappiness, nature/culture (Lévi-Strauss 1972). The protagonists in these stories provide solutions to these matters that afflict both the individual and society at large.

The protagonists in these stories are courageous, wise, and decisive boys and young men, and they represent professions and games traditionally viewed in our western culture as masculine. They possess knowledge, intuition, and the will power to act for the good of the community. The supporting characters in these stories also represent a wealth of different masculine roles, including wise old men, groups of gold diggers, and male relatives. The stories strengthen the notion of male agency and provide the characters with masculine action spaces.

Although the spectrum of locations featured in these stories reflects the traditional division into feminine and masculine spaces – by, for instance, making the female characters dependent on the male heroes and in need of their help –, the counterbalance to masculinity in these stories is not only, however, the stereotypical damsel in distress. These stories present an array of different

kinds of female characters who are by turns plotting, active, wilful, and determined. For instance, the most important supporting character in *Päiviö's Feast* is Maaria, the girl who has been taken prisoner by the earth spirits against her will. She represents several attributes in the story: she is a victim, the unhappy prisoner of the earth spirits who must be helped, but she is also a sprightly character eager to seize the moment. She warns Päiviö not to eat from the earth spirits' table and asks him to set her free. As he rescues her, she shows her contempt and anger at her captors, shouting: "Farewell, dismal, mouldy cave!" Once she has been rescued and returned to the empirical North to live by Päiviö's side herding the reindeer, her outward appearance changes from that of a threadbare, dainty girl to a young woman in traditional Sámi costume.

The trolls depicted in *Päiviö's Feast* are mostly women; they are by nature irascible, cunning, slightly stupid, badly behaved, and define themselves more through a group identity than as individuals. The troll women are also portrayed as seducers and plotters and as governing a variety of social spaces, for instance as housewives. Thus the stories do not construct simple femininity–masculinity binaries (cf. Butler 1990), rather the protagonist's characteristics and process of development are shaped using a variety of subsidiary characters. Moreover, female characters are not essentialised, i.e. their character traits are not seen as innate or inherent. For instance, they are not only care-givers or in need of help (cf. Chodorow 1989, 7–8, 148–53).

Other figures helping to define the protagonists are animals, such as elks, reindeer, owls, as well as stones (for instance a pile of stones) and plants (such as spruce trees). The stories feature a variety of wild animals that help and test the main characters. They carry the protagonists from one place to another; they give advice and provide the characters with items they will need on their journeys (a jacket, a feather, magic words). They also test the protagonist's skills and bravery. Conversely, the characters' pets in these stories remain in the background, almost as nothing but props on the stage upon which other events take place. A dog may bark at a character's feet or a horse whinny in its harness as the focus shifts to the protagonist's actions. Pets serve as symbols and credible criteria of the empirical location. When the protagonist receives heroic characteristics, he generally also receives animals to help him and to assess his actions. Indeed, these stories are filled with echoes of beliefs regarding animal spirits and animals of the soul common in Sámi mythology and, to a greater extent, the shamanistic worldview. An animal spirit protects its own kind and people who rely upon it, whereas an animal of the soul is believed to represent an animal incarnation of the human soul (Pentikäinen 1995, 89–90; Pentikäinen 2006).

These stories contain a wide variety of fairytale fantasy characters, including trolls, the daughters of dusk, the sons of the northern lights, a black-cloaked

figure, and a witch doctor. They all have special powers that they either bequeath the protagonists or use against them. The awareness of the continued presence of these figures in the empirical world is characteristic of traditions in and among northern cultures and peoples (Valkonen 2003, 19). This gallery of characters and animals and the lively depiction of nature points to common Sámi beliefs, an animistic worldview, and the symbolism of witches' drums, all of which do not place humans at the centre of the universe (cf. Helander 2000; Pentikäinen 1987).

As represented in these stories, the border between humans and supernatural beings is constantly shifting. Protagonists can have supernatural abilities, or abilities that can be seen as such, for instance the ability to change form (*The Feather Gown*) or to speak with animals (*Hauen harteilla*). Subsidiary characters or adversaries may be figures that look like humans, though who, by virtue of their individual skills, are non-human (*Päiviö's Feast*, *The Feather Gown*). These stories portray a model of diverse interaction and a network of relationships, and they provide a dualistic image of the family. In the empirical North, the families in these stories consist primarily of parents and children as well as close relatives, both living and deceased. The family model presented in the empirical North could be called a traditional family, an institution, normalised by the relationship between man and wife and which includes children and close relatives (Nicholson 1997, 28–29, 31). This notion of the family belongs very firmly to a pre-industrialised era, to the institutions of the 19th century, its structures and ways of thinking, and to a religious worldview (Einonen and Karonen 2002, 7, 12). In addition to the family relationships between people, these stories depict a number of totemistic families established between humans and animals. For instance, in the story *On the Pike's Shoulders*), the witch doctor's sons are an eagle, a deer, and a pike. Alongside this he has help from a beaver breathing medicinal steam from his nostrils and the black dogs guarding the house. The stories present variations on the lost forms of social relationships that stress the various bonds between humans and animals, men and women. The nuclear family relations of the everyday, empirical North are thus varied in the mythical North.

The Northern Ethos

In our article, we have posited that, in children's fiction, location is constructed as both empirical and mythical spaces that often overlap with one another and between which a number of transitional stages establish themselves. We have also demonstrated how the empirical and mythical places

are constructed in these stories using three levels of localisation. These places are seen primarily as the 'now' of the story; secondly, they may be places to which the characters in the story aspire or destinations, and, thirdly, they may be constructed through a series of ongoing processes.

The story of *Riimurasia*, as quoted at the beginning of the paper, reveals that a place can be both strange and somehow familiar: places are constructed using widely recognisable visual and narrative elements, though given places may contain specific features that are only recognisable within a given cultural environment. In these stories, the models of place and identity grow partly from collective stories such as fairytales, myths and beliefs. The repertoire of northern places and identities are also affected by the concrete meanings attached to a place, for instance, fells, streams, sleds, as well as by various mental significances, such as notions regarding animals and the power of nature, attributes often associated with the North.

The dominant media helps to construct a global, homogenous children's media culture, represented, for instance, in Disney animations. The still-picture animations that we have examined here, however, belong to a culturally and geographically specific place and make full use of the imagery, themes, and language of the Finnish tradition. The experience of watching still-picture animations produces cultural memory (cf. Sturken and Cartwright 2009), which is passed from one generation to the next and which enables the construction of a locally rooted identity.

Places, locations and empirical spaces are both socially and culturally shaped; they are constantly being constructed and reconstructed through different visual performances, manners of speech, and rhetorical strategies (cf. Savolainen 2002, 40). The still-picture animations at the focus of this article help create cultural continuity and generally shared meanings attached to our understanding of the North. In this respect, the animations provide the keys to an understanding of the temporal and thematic changes in culture by presenting in a comprehensible form beliefs about specific places and forms of life, as well as the role these beliefs play in people's lives. Understanding the diversity of northern cultural associations educates (young) viewers and prepares them for encounters with the diversity found in different multicultural settings (cf. Timonen 2005).

At the same time, as these animations reflect culture in their own age, they are also imbued with the history of our understanding of the structure of the world and of humans' role within it, as cultural structures change in line with the structures of society. In this manner, the long waves of the past, as it were, 'flush' the thoughts and beliefs of the viewing public even as they live in the modern age, in the historical present (Knuuttila 1994, 24). A child sitting in

front of a television screen watching an animation is like a child sitting protected in a tent, gazing at the endlessness of the night sky through the chinks in the tent seams, surrounded by recognisable familial relationships and a map of images shared by society at large. The twinkle of the stars or the continuous provision of television programmes is like an endless chain of variations, the beginning and end of which no single viewer or producer can know. The makers of still-picture animations on television shape new stories using the material they have to hand and the expressions and subjects of a tradition that already exists. It is for this reason that those in charge of producing stories about the North and who oversee the ways in which such stories are produced, can have a direct impact on the kind of worldview and values that we attach to the North.

References

Butler, Judith. 1990. *Gender Trouble. Feminism and the Subversion of Identity.* New York, London: Routledge.

Campbell, Joseph. 1990 [1949]. *The Hero With The Thousand Faces*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.

Chodorow, Nancy. J. 1989. *Feminism and Psychoanalytic Theory*. Cambridge: Polity Press.

Einonen, Piia and Karonen, Petri. 2002. *Arjen valta. Suomalaisen yhteiskunnan patriarkaa-lisesta järjestyksestä myöhäiskeskiajalta teollistumisen kynnykselle vuosina 1450–1860* [The Power of the Every Day. The Patriarchal Practices In Finnish Society from the Late Medieval till the Beginning of the Industrialism, 1450–1860]. Helsinki: SKS.

Fiske, John. 1996. *Introduction to Communication Studies.* New York: Routledge.

Forceville, Charles. 1996. *Pictorial Metaphor in Advertising.* New York: Routledge.

Greimas, Algirdas Julien. 1980 [1966]. *Strukturaalista semantiikkaa* [Structural Semantics]. Helsinki: Gaudeamus.

Hall, Stuart. 1997. *Representation. Cultural Representations and Signifying Practitices*. London, Thousands Oaks, New Delhi: Sage.

Helander, Elina. 2000. Saamelainen maailmankuva ja luontosuhde. In *Beaivvi Mánát. Saamelaisten juuret ja nykyaika*, ed. Irja Seurujärvi-Kari, 171–182. Helsinki: SKS. [The Sami Peoples' Worldview and Relation to Nature. In Beaivvi Mánát. The Traditional and Contemporary Culture of Sami People.]

Karjalainen, Pauli Tapani. 1997. Aika, paikka ja muistin maantiede. In *Tila, paikka ja maisema. Tutkimusretkiä uuteen maantieteeseen*, ed. Timo

Haarni, 227–241. Tampere: Vastapaino. [Time, Space and the Geography of the Memory. In Time, Space and Landscape. Explorations for the New Geography.]

Karjalainen, Pauli Tapani. 1999. Pitkä kävely maisemassa. *Alue ja ympäristö* vol. 28: 81–87. [Long Walk in the Landscape. In Location and Environment.]

Karjalainen, Pauli Tapani. 2004. Ympäristö ulkoa ja sisältä. Geografiasta geobiografiaan. In *Paikan heijastuksia. Ihmisen ympäristösuhteen tutkimus ja representaation käsite*, ed. Risto Mäntysalo, 49–68. Helsinki: Atena. [The Environment from Inside and Out. In The Reflections of the Place. The Study of the Humans' Relation to their Environmental Relationships and the Concept of Representation.]

Karjalainen, Pauli Tapani. 2008. Paikka, aika ja elämänkuva. In *Ympäristö täynnä tarinoita. Kirjoituksia ympäristön kuvien ja kertomusten kysymyksistä*, ed. Antti Haapala, 13–31. Helsinki: UNIpress. [Place, Time and Image of Life. In The Living Surroundings Full of Narratives. Writings about Images and Stories.]

Knuuttila, Seppo. 1994. *Tyhmän kansan teoria. Näkökulmia menneestä tulevaan* [The Theory for the Stupid Nation. Perspectives from Past to Present]. Helsinki: SKS.FLS.

Knuuttila, Seppo. 2010. Perceiving and visualizing the myths In *Myth, Image, Idea: Kalevala granaína* (Catalog of the exhibition Kalevala granaína, held in several Finnish museums, 2010–2012) 16–22. Helsinki: Mäntykustannus.

Lévi-Strauss, Claude. 1972. *Structural anthropology* I. Harmondsworth: Penguin Books.

Macnaghten, Paul and Urry, John. 1998. *Contested Natures*. London, Thousands Oaks, & New Delhi: Sage.

Nicholson, Linda. 1997. The Myth of the Traditional Family. In *Feminism and Families*, ed. Nelson Lindemann, 27–42. New York: Routledge.

Pennanen, Juha. 2000. Ihmisen ja luonnon vuorovaikutus saamelaiskulttuurin lähtökohtana In *Siidastallan. Siidoista kyliin. Perinteinen luontosidonnainen saamelaiskulttuuri ja sen muuttuminen*, ed. Juha Pennanen, 13–18. Inari: Inarin ja saamelaismuseon julkaisuja. [The Interaction between Human and Nature as a Startingpoint for Sami Culture. In Siidastallan. From Siida to Villages. The Traditional Nature-Oriented Sami Culture and Its Changes.]

Pentikäinen, Juha. 1987. The Shamanic Drum as Cognitive Map. The Historical and Semiotic Study of The Saami Drum in Rome. In *Mythology and Cosmic Order*, ed. Remi Gothóni, 67–82, Helsinki: SKS.

Pentikäinen, Juha. 1995. *Saamelaiset – Pohjoisen kansan mytologia* [Sami People – The Mythology for the Northern Population]. Helsinki: SKS.

Pentikäinen, Juha. 2006. *Shamanism and Culture*. Helsinki: Ethnika.

Relph, Edward. 1986. *Place and Placelessness*. London: Pion.

Ruotsala, Helena. 2008. Does Sense of Place still Exist? *Journal of Ethnology and Folkloristics* vol. 2: 43–54.

Ryan, Marie Laure. 1991. *Possible worlds, artificial intelligence, and narrative theory*. Bloomington, Indianapolis: University of Bloomington & Indianapolis Press.

Savolainen, Matti. 1995. Keskusta, marginalia, kirjallisuus In *Marginalia ja kirjallisuus. Ääniä suomalaisen kirjallisuuden reunoilta*, ed. Matti Savolainen, 7–35. Helsinki: [Center, Marginal, Literature. In Marginal and Literature. Voices from the Edges of the Finnish Literature.]

Savolainen, Matti. 2002. Cantus arcticus eli populaarimusiikkia jänkältä. Pohjoissuoma-laista kulttuurintutkimusta. *Kulttuurintutkimus* vol. 19: 37–43. [Cantus Arcticus. Popular Music from the Forest. In: Cultural Studies.]

Siikala, Anna-Leena. 2002. What Myths Tell about Past Finno-Ugric Modes of Thinking. In *Myth and Mentality Studies in Folklore and Popular Thought,* ed. Anna-Leena Siikala, 15-32. Helsinki: SKS.

Siikala, Anna-Liisa. 1994. *Suomalainen samanismi* [The Finnish Samanism]. Helsinki: SKS.

Sturken, Marita and& Cartwright, Lisa. 2009. *Practices of looking: An introduction to visual culture.* New York*:* Oxford University Press.

Tasker, Yvonne. 1993. *Spectacular bodies. Gender, Genre and the Action Cinema*. New York: Routledge.

Timonen, Eija. 2005. *Perinteestä mediavirtaan. Suomalaisen kansanperinteen muuntuminen arkistomuistiinpanoista lastenkulttuuriksi* [From Tradition to Media Flow. The Transformation of Folklore into Children's Culture]. Helsinki: SKS. FLS

Tuan, Yi-Fu. 1977. *Space and Place. The Perspective of Experience*. Minnesota: University of Minnesota Press.

Tuan, Yi-Fu. 1990. *Topofilia. A Study of Enviromental Perception, Attitudes and Values.* New York: Columbia University Press.

Valkonen, Jarno. 2003. Ylä-Lapin luontopolitiikka ja luonnon paikallisuudet. In *Pohjoinen luontosuhde. Elämäntapa ja luonnon politisoituminen*, ed. Leena Suopajärvi, 163–182. Rovaniemi: Lapin yliopiston yhteiskuntatieteellisiä julkaisuja. [The Politics of the Finnish Lapland and the Localities of the Nature. In The Northern People's Relationship with Nature. Livelihood and the Politics of the Environment.]

Valkonen, Jarno. 2005. Saamelainen luontosuhde. Käytännölliset ja kertomukselliset ulottuvuudet. *Kulttuurintutkimus* vol. 22: 15–26. [Sami Peoples' Relationship with Nature. In Cultural Studies.]

Voigt, Vilmos. 2002. Cosmographical Maps (on Stars). In *Myth and Mentality Studies in Folklore and Popular Thought*, ed. Anna-Leena Siikala, 15–32. Helsinki: SKS.

List of Films (Still-picture animations)

Riimurasia (*The Rune Box*). 1993. In the series *Aarteet* (*Treasure*). Pictures: Maileena Kurkinen, Text: Eija Timonen. Editor: Anna-Liisa Kirsi. Finnish Broadcasting Television. Yle. Channel 2, Lastenohjelmat (Children's Programmes).

Päiviön pidot (*Päiviö's Feast*). 1994. In the series *Maahiset* (*Trolls*). Pictures: Maileena Kurkinen, Text: Eija Timonen. Editor: Anna-Liisa Kirsi. Finnish Broadcasting Television. Yle. Channel 2, Lastenohjelmat (Children's Programmes).

Hauen harteilla (*On the Pike's Shoulders*). 2004. In the series *Käsikäpälässä* (*Hand in Pawn*). Text: Eija Timonen, Pictures: Pirkko-Liisa Surojegin. Editor: Anna-Liisa Kirsi, Producer: Jukka Nurminen. Finnish Broadcasting Television. Yle. Channel 2, Lastenohjelmat (Children's Programmes).

Sulkapuku (*The Feather Gown*). 2004. In the series *Käsikäpälässä* (*Hand in Pawn*). Text: Eija Timonen, Pictures: Pirkko-Liisa Surojegin. Editor: Anna-Liisa Kirsi, Producer: Jukka Nurminen. Finnish Broadcasting Television. Yle. Channel 2, Lastenohjelmat (Children's Programmes).

List of Figures

Figures 1–2. Maileena Kurkinen: Jouni in the Fell in *Riimurasia* (*The Rune Box*, 1993), and the treasure in *Riimurasia* (*The Rune Box*, 1993).

Figures 3–4. Pirkko-Liisa Surojegin: Pekka in a desolate island in *Hauen harteilla* (*On the Pike's Shoulders*, 2004), Maileena Kurkinen: Päiviö wakes up as tied up in *Päiviön pidot* (*Päiviö's Feast*, 1994).

Figures 5–6. Maileena Kurkinen: Päiviö rescues Maaria in *Päiviön pidot* (*Päiviö's Feast*, 1994), Maileena Taneli Kurkinen: crossing the bridge in *Sulkapuku* (*Feather Gown*, 2004).

Notes

Acta Universitatis Sapientiae

The scientific journal of Sapientia University publishes original papers and deep surveys in several areas of sciences written in English.
Information about each series can be found at the Internet address
http://www.acta.sapientia.ro.

Acta Universitatis Sapientiae
Film and Media Studies

Sapientia University

Scientia Publishing House

ISSN 2065-5924
http://www.acta.sapientia.ro

Information for authors

Acta Universitatis Sapientiae, Film and Media Studies publishes only original, previously unpublished articles in English in all fields of film and media studies. All papers are peer reviewed. The series is published in 1-2 volumes annually. Papers published in current and previous volumes can be found in Portable Document Format (pdf) form at the address: http://www.acta.sapientia.ro.

Articles should be submitted via e-mail to the following address: acta-film@acta.sapientia.ro

Please submit your article together with the following information about yourself: a) academic affiliation (i.e. official name of the university or research institute where you work, together with its location: city and country); b) your contact e-mail address.

Submit a short abstract of your article (approx. 150-250 words).

Please send your article as an A4 Word document (.doc or .docx).

In case you want to submit pictures together with your article (preferably screenshots from the films referred to in the text): a) please send the pictures separately in jpg format; b) insert the pictures in the order you want to use them into the Word document at the end of the article in a List of Figures, add captions. If you want to use copyrighted pictures or extensive quotations, you need to submit to the publisher letters granting permission for extensive quotation and the use of illustrations.

Articles should generally be between 4000 and 6000 words long.

Detailed information regarding the general style and referencing format can be found at the address: http://www.acta.spientia.ro/acta-film/film-main.htm.

The submitted papers should not be considered for publication by other journals. The corresponding author is responsible for obtaining the permission of coauthors and of the authorities of institutes, if needed, for publication, the Editorial Board disclaiming any responsibility.

Each author is entitled to an issue containing his paper free of charge. No reprints will be available.

Contact address and subscription:
Acta Universitatis Sapientiae, Film and Media Studies
RO 400112 Cluj-Napoca, Romania
Str. Matei Corvin nr. 4.
E-mail: acta-film@acta.sapientia.ro

Publication supported by

Bethlen Gábor
Alap