

First films and generic allegories: on the role of
complex narrative designs in films by Natali,
Aronofsky, Tykwer and Nolan

Andrea Virginás

Sapientia University, Cluj-Napoca

avirginas@gmail.com

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film genre(s), film(ic) narratives and filmmakers on their routes to acquire authorial profiles

the ongoing discussion referring to complex narratives in contemporary film (signalled by such authors as David Bordwell, Allan Cameron, Thomas Elsaesser, Warren Buckland, Eleftheria Thanouli) helped to construct the corpus of analysis, compare its members as for their narrative designs, and come up with some conclusion about their changing attitudes towards genre usage (a goal in the overall project *The Role of Generic Panels in European Small Cinemas*)

- 1997-1998
- *Cube* by Vincenzo Natali
- *Pi* by Darren Aronofsky
- *Run, Lola, Run* by Tom Tykwer
- *Following*, by Christopher Nolan.

- 2009-2010
- *Splice* (Natali)
- *Black Swan* (Aronofsky)
- *The International* (Tykwer)
- *Inception* (Nolan)

“There is complexity if things relate but don’t add up, if events occur but not within the processes of linear time, and if phenomena share a space but cannot be mapped in terms of a single set of three-dimensional coordinates'. (...) irreducible multiplicity, historical undecidability, and the simultaneous presence of contradictory elements, under the logic of both/and (rather than either/or).” (Ang 2011:783)

Puzzle films “(...) blur the boundaries between different levels of reality, are riddled with gaps, deception, labyrinthine structures, ambiguity and overt coincidences. They are populated with narrators who are schizophrenic, lose their memory, are unreliable narrators, or are dead (...).”

(Buckland 2009: 6)

“The difference between the semiotic square and the strategic form of the game does not reflect an essential difference between narratives and games, but is more a matter of perspective. Narratives are, after all, organised around the choices of their protagonists. (...) [Roland Barthes’] Cardinal functions propel the story forwards and engage the reader or spectator by raising questions, delaying resolutions, suggesting alternative possibilities, triggering hypotheses, and generating curiosity and suspense, all of which depend on the possibility of at least two alternative continuations.” (Simons 2007: 186)

Cube (1997)



vs.

Splice (2009)



Run, Lola, Run (1998)

vs.

The International (2009)



Pi (1998)

vs. Black Swan (2010)



Following (1997)

vs.

Inception (2010)



“An improved realist proposal is that movie genres are types.

Each type has a type-constitutive feature, a feature that items must have in order to be tokens of the type. (...) Perhaps, then, movie genres are types whose tokens are movies having whatever features constitutes the type. (...) The advantage of this proposal is that the identity of a genre is not secured by its tokens but by a feature they have. Movies actually made in a movie genre are not essential to it. Thus the comparison class in appreciating a movie in a genre may go beyond movies actually made in the genre.” (Laetz - McIver Lopes 2009: 158)

““It is the disjunctive feature of allegory that is usually emphasized (that is building into one semantic system two quite different phenomena, while also keeping them apart). According to Northrop Frye, one can speak of allegory if “parts of a narrative evidently and continuously refer to another simultaneous event- or thought- structure, which may be historical events, moral or philosophical thoughts, but natural events as well” (1965.12). Paul de Man observes that allegory is sequential and narrative, but the theme of its narration is not compulsorily temporal (...) (1981.1).” (Bókay 1997: 587)

FIRST FILMS: set out to reform classical storytelling through **complex narrative choices**: cause for their acquiring **authorial profiles** (in spite of their continuous **interest in one filmic genre** - horror-science fiction, psycho-thriller, action film, noir detection film).

BIG HITS: they **create allegories of the basic genres they are interested in**, and here complex narrative solutions play the role of **glue** (smoothly decoded by connoisseur audience)

THANKYOU FOR YOUR ATTENTION.